

## TORONTO HAVEN AND PRISON-GATE MISSION.

To the Editor:

Sir,—Will you kindly allow me to call the attention of the readers of the Canada Presbyterian to a benevolent work in Toronto which is in need of help at the present. I refer to the Haven and Prison Gate Mission. The object of the institution is to shelter, so far as room will allow, all destitute, friendless, sick, helpless, unfortunate and fallen girls and women who may apply.

It is now about fifteen years since the Haven was opened, and during that time thousands of young women (many of them of tender years), aged, gray-haired ones and little children have been sheltered. Some of these have been cared for months and years, and frequently we have had the great satisfaction of returning wanderers to their homes and sorrowing derelicts to their families from jails, reformatories, police courts, hospitals, disorderly houses, the streets, from service, sick or in trouble, from country homes, having run away, and from respectable homes, deserted wives and their children.

A new wing is in course of erection. In this we expect to have better appliances for our industrial work, as well as additional sleeping room for forty. Just here friends can help us. The sum of twenty-five dollars will purchase an iron bedstead with all requirements and conveniences for one person, and we earnestly ask individuals, societies, and bands of workers to help us rescue the fallen, and provide for the uncared-for by undertaking the furnishing of one of these rooms. I will gladly furnish further information.

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## THE HIGHLAND REMNANT.

Perhaps there is no type of religious devotion more sincere than that to be found in the Highlands of Scotland. To an intensity of conviction it adds a piety at once strangely tender and severe. Amidst the boulders of an uncompromising dogmatism it pours the crystal waters of a genuine spirituality, as sunny and sweet as the burn that runs among the rocks beneath the Highland hills. In these days of general compromise where dogmatism and creed get ground down, and every stream is muddy with the debris, we miss too often at once the hard rock and the clear stream in Christian belief and practice. We get wearied of explanations and disillusion, and we long sometimes for the Highland narrowness and piety and enthusiasm, as dwellers in southern plains do for Highland mountains and waters. It is this feeling of admiration for the uncompromising loyalty and high-toned spirituality of the Highlanders which make us feel the more deeply such a movement as that represented by the meeting held at Inverness on the 15th of last month. From what transpired there it is evident that some six congregations in the north and north-west are determined to carry their opposition to the Declaratory Act so far as to secede from what they call not the Free Church, but the "Church of the Declaratory Act." Such a determination cannot but touch us deeply. It is noble, and yet it is a mistake. We know the heart of the men who have made it, too well to hope that they will turn from it, any more than their fathers turned from the charge at Killiecrankie.

The very narrowness which makes them fearless for the truth they know, and loyal to the ideal of life they follow, prevent their grasping the real issues at stake or seeing that what they fear is what best preserves their dearest interests. It is to preserve the faith of the Church and not to destroy it that the form of its faith's expression is changed from the older phraseology to the new. The tree of the Christian life is immortal, its leaves bud forth and are green, they wither and fall, and others take their place. When the formularies of one age disappear, they leave their mark upon the rising stem

and their memory is sacred; but the health of the later growth depends upon their successors. The Free Church, like all living branches of the Church of Christ, has been passing through the trying time that comes to creeds with the fall of the leaf and the coming of the spring, and it has come through the ordeal right nobly. It has preserved the truth and reproduced it in the living green of fresh declaration. Beneath the fair foliage there shall soon be seen fruit in its season. Sincerely as we believe and rejoice in this, we cannot but pause with a real, yet pathetic, admiration, to look, as it were, upon the last charge of a strangely noble, if mistakenly narrow, spiritual race. A few short years and we shall hear their shout no more, their voice shall be no longer heard among the hills, and, it may be, we shall fruitlessly yearn amidst difficult times for a testimony as unflinching and a loyalty to the Master as true as theirs.—The Presbyterian, London, England.

## CHANGING ONE'S MIND.

An old proverb says: "To confess that one has changed his mind is but to admit that he is wiser to-day than he was yesterday." Assuming the change to be honest and the result of larger knowledge of the particular question or maturer thought in regard to it, the saw is manifestly true. And yet there is a prevailing sentiment which often makes it one of the keenest reproaches which can be brought against a public man to quote some expression of opinion at a former period which is in contradiction with one more recently expressed. True, the censure is usually confined to those who hold the discarded, not the newly embraced opinion. Nevertheless, how often does the person against whom the reproach of inconsistency, and, by implication at least, of insincerity, is brought, think it incumbent upon him to resort to subtle and doubtful explanations in the attempt to show that the earlier expression is not correctly reported, or that it did not mean what the words seem to convey, but is susceptible of quite another turn. Why is it that, as a rule, we are so loth to admit frankly that our former opinions or convictions with regard to certain questions have undergone changes more or less radical as we have grown older? There is, perhaps, scarcely a greater foe to truth than this false pride in consistency, this reluctance to admit that we were formerly wrong, or now believe that we were, in regard to certain important principles or doctrines? There is not, we venture to say, one of our readers whose views on many subjects have not undergone very material modifications within the last twenty, fifteen, ten, yes, even five years. There is not one of us who will not ten years hence, should he live so long, have materially changed some opinions which he now cherishes as convictions. Possibly we are making the assertion too general. A great student of human nature has told us that there are men who, when once they have grown fond of an opinion will call it honor, honesty and faith and cling to it as to dear life itself. We ourselves have met with persons of good ability and high standing who, however candidly and dispassionately they might, in the first instance, examine a question upon which it was necessary for them to declare themselves, having once committed themselves to a given view, made it a matter of pride, almost of conscience, to retain that opinion ever afterwards. Said opinion; duly stamped and ticketed, was systematically laid away in its proper pigeon-hole in the mental storehouse, with the distinct understanding that it was a finished product, subject to no reconsideration or

amendment, always ready when called for. Such a method has its conveniences and saves a vast amount of time and perplexity to a busy man, but it does not produce exactly the kind of creed to which one would like to pin his faith as sure to be in accordance with the evidence up to date.

Reflections such as these will bring at once to the minds of most readers the curious mental history of one who, while in many respects the most remarkable, and in the political world at least, the foremost among living men, has probably changed his mental attitude and his political creed more continuously and completely than any other public man now living. It is characteristic of his changes, too, as of those of most men, that they have been so gradual that he himself has been in a large measure unconscious of them, and often unwilling to admit their existence. This is a very common experience. What is far less usual, in fact extremely rare, is that his changes even up to extreme old age have been uniformly and steadily in the direction of radicalism, thereby constituting a most marked exception to the rule that the radicalism of youth and early manhood is soon modified, under the influence of the cares and responsibilities and waning enthusiasms of middle age, and especially of prosperous middle age, into a more or less easy-going conservatism, and not infrequently into a confirmed and inveterate toryism. No doubt very wide differences of opinion would be found amongst our readers, could we take their views, or read their thoughts, not only as to the progress in wisdom, or the opposite, indicated by Mr. Gladstone's veerings, but as to the nature of the causes and influences which have brought them about. Into this ethical aspect of the subject we need not now enter. These observations or rather the train of thought which has led to them, has been suggested by an argument used, not by Mr. Gladstone, but by his greatest political antagonist, Lord Salisbury. The ex-premier is arguing that if Home Rule is granted to Ireland it will be given not under a conviction of right, or as a matter of goodwill, but as the outcome of a relaxation of the spirit of empire, "the staunchness, and tenacity, and determination," which have given Great Britain her supremacy over so many lands, and by which alone, in his view, that ascendancy can be maintained. He writes, "The opinions to which all responsible statesmen were pledged upon the Irish question, till the actual moment of capitulation came, make it idle to pretend that, if Home Rule is conceded now, it will have been bestowed freely and of good-will." Herein it is distinctly assumed that the change of opinion and policy on the part of so many not only of the English statesmen but of the English people whose opinions no doubt mould quite as much as they are moulded by their political leaders, is the result of weariness and weakness rather than of new perceptions of right, and a new determination to be just and fair. Our concern just now is not with the specific instance, but with the general notion. There is, we venture to affirm, good reason to believe that the gradual change which, as Lord Salisbury sees, is coming over the spirit of the nation, is quite as much the result of a growing conscientiousness as of a failure of energy or determination. There is a sense, it is true, in which conscience does make a coward of a nation as of an individual, but it is equally true of the nation as of the individual that "thrice is he armed who hath his quarrel just," and that there is nothing which contributes so much to staunchness and determination as a conviction of right and a sense of duty. We make bold, therefore, to maintain that, other things being equal, the probabilities both of right and of final victory are on the side of the one who has changed his mind in obedience to conscientious conviction. The man who can boast that he has never changed his mind is, it may be pretty safely affirmed, in accordance with another old saw, the man who has no mind worth speaking of to change.

## Christian Endeavor.

## OUR EXAMPLE. WHAT SHALL IT BE?

REV. W. S. M'TAVISH, B.D., ST. GEORGE.

Sept. 17th.—Rom. 14: 21; Matt. 5: 16.

It is a solemn thought that we influence others by our example. If we properly realized this, we should feel that our lives are charged with a new responsibility. Some one has truly said, "To live is a tremendous responsibility. In this sensitive world our influence goes out touching all around us, and it goes on and on, touching those now unborn after we are silent in the grave. What shall it be? Like the Dead Sea that withers and blasts everything on its shores? Or like the Nile that gives life and verdure, fruitfulness and beauty, wherever it flows?"

Daniel Webster once said that, the most profound thought that can enter into the mind is the thought of responsibility to God. We can understand how that responsibility is enhanced, when we remember that we are influencing others for good or evil by our example. If a man were compelled to spend his life on a lonely island, he might live to himself, but the truth is, that we meet with others and influence them, and so our responsibility is greatly enhanced. Every one, no matter how poor, how young, how ignorant, or how obscure, exercises an influence by his example. A pebble thrown into the ocean, sets in motion circles of waves, which go on ever expanding till they reach the farthest shore. Men can believe that the example of Vashti would influence the women in all the provinces in the Kingdom of Persia (Esth. 1: 16-18). Paul said, "None of us liveth unto himself and no man dieth unto himself." Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

When the Romans wished to teach their children the horrible evils of intemperance, they made their slaves drunk and then told their children to look at those slaves and see how they demeaned themselves. These shrewd Romans felt that example spoke louder than words.

A preacher, who occupies one of the leading pulpits in America to-day, once said, "When I entered Jefferson College, my room-mate was a stranger to me. He was a Christian and I was not. The first night we were together, he retired before me. Before going to bed, he knelt at the bed-side in prayer. Like John following Peter into the sepulchre, I followed him in secret devotion. For thirty years the unconscious influence of that example has been affecting my daily life."

What shall our example be? Shall it be such as to make men scoff at religion, or as to be a stumbling-block in the way of a weak brother? Shall it be such as to hinder others from becoming Christians, or to cause the Church of Christ to be scandalized? Or shall it be commend Christ where He was despised before, and honour His Gospel where it was formerly scorned?

Doubtless, there will be many surprises at the judgment, and perhaps one of the gladdest of these will be the fact that our example made its influence felt for good in places where we never dreamed of its doing so. The truth is, we are often watched and imitated when we never suspect it. Let us strive so to order our lives, that we can say with Paul, "Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you." (Phil. 4: 9.)

The days of chivalry are not gone, notwithstanding Burke's grand dirge over them; they still live in that far-off worship paid by many a youth and man to the woman of whom he never dreams that he shall touch so much as her little finger or the hem of her robe.—George Eliot.