

## Our Contributors.

### POLONIUS MAKES SOME FURTHER REMARKS ON ECONOMY.

BY KNOXONIAN.

Men of Ontario, you are a thrifty people. You have no House of Lords as the people of our Eastern Provinces have and you manage fairly well without one. Some of you say that you have a tidy little surplus of about \$5,000,000 and others contend that there is no surplus worth speaking about. That surplus is a queer kind of a fund. Its existence and amount seems to vary with the political complexion and necessities of the men who look at it. An elector of a Grit complexion can see \$5,000,000 with the naked eye. A pronounced Tory can hardly see anything in the Provincial treasury with the aid of a powerful magnifying glass. Perhaps, like Lord Nelson, he puts the glass to his blind eye. An elector who does not want to spend any more Provincial money—if there is any such elector in the Province—sees very little in Sir Oliver's strong box; a deputation of any political stripe in search of an appropriation sees millions. But, men of Ontario, whether you have a surplus or not you have no Provincial debt and that is a great thing. Yours is one of the few communities in the world that pays its way. You erect splendid asylums and magnificent Parliament buildings, you open up colonization roads in the new parts of your Province, give liberal grants to your schools, agricultural societies and charitable institutions, and expend money in various other useful directions and yet you keep your Province out of debt. That is well. Very few people can do that. You carried off more honors at the World's Fair than any community of four times your population. You have good schools and colleges. You give your boys and girls a good chance. Carlyle said that there were four millions of people in London mostly fools. There are about two millions of people in Ontario mostly sensible. Sometimes the fools that have a dash of knavery in their make up lead some of the sensible citizens astray, but for the most part Ontario people can take care of themselves pretty well.

Your Legislature will meet in a few days and there will be any amount of talk about economy. That kind of talk is popular just now and will continue popular as long as wheat is sixty cents a bushel. While your legislators are discussing the number of cents per day that should be expended in keeping each patient in the lunatic asylums, the bill for legislation will be running up at a rapid pace. I do not happen to know how much per day it costs to "run" the Local Legislature, but the expense of one day's useless talking would probably board several patients for a twelve month. But economy is a good thing. That is to say, it is a good thing for other people. Your legislators will probably show how highly they value economy in public affairs by cutting down the little salaries of a few clerks, by dismissing an occasional minor official, by sharply criticizing the allowance to each patient in the asylums and last, but by no means least, by spending thousands in worse than useless debates that are intended for no higher purpose than to make party capital for the coming general election.

I hear, men of Ontario, that some of you have hit upon a new and original plan for saving money in public affairs. If I understand your proposal, it is to practice economy by having more elections. You propose to elect the registrars and sheriffs and county attorneys and masters in chancery and other county officials by popular vote. A few people in this country have been of the opinion that elections are a rather expensive part of our system of self-government. They derange business, stop the wheels of commerce for a time, to a greater or less extent, take men away from their work and cost money in many direct and indirect ways. Perhaps an increased number of them might save money. Somebody told an Irishman that a coal stove saved half the expense for fuel. "Why not buy two stoves?" said Pat, "and save the whole of it." Why not elect officials of all kinds by popular vote, and save still more money? Why not extend the

principle to townships, and elect the clerk and the treasurer and the pound-keepers and the path masters and the fence viewers, by popular vote? Why not extend it to school sections and have the rate payers elect the teacher by popular vote? Why not have a popular election in the family and allow the children to take a popular vote on their father? If more popular elections can do this Province any good, we can have any amount of them. Somebody with a turn for statistics, figured out the other day, that every tenth man in Canada is an official or law maker of some sort. If the nine citizens who are out of office would only leave their work and spend more time and money in electing the tenth, business might improve and money become more plentiful. A few people in Ontario may not be able to see how more elections would make more money for anybody, except the high-minded and upright electors who sell their votes regularly, but these people must just be educated so that they can see.

Men of Ontario, you have large county councils in several counties! Some of them take almost as much time to do a little business as an average church court takes. Judging from the joy with which the advent of a second or third deputy reeve is received, I should say the people believe in a large county council. That is all right. Let them have a hundred county councillors in each county if they want them and are willing to pay the bill, but they should not cry out about the expense of government and at the same time joyfully run up the bill.

Looking over the whole Dominion the conclusion of the matter seems to be this: Economy in public affairs is a good thing for the other fellow to practise, especially if he is a weak fellow and has few friends.

Written for the CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

### THE EMPLOYMENT OF ELDERLY MINISTERS.

BY PROFESSOR BAIRD.

It cannot be denied that an investigation into the reasons why so many worthy ministers are cast off, and virtually denied employment as pastors, while still far from being decrepit, is a living issue and any plausible solution of the difficulty should command careful and general attention. And yet it would be rash to admit that the grievance is as general as some people would have us believe. Happily there are within the borders of our own church numbers of elderly ministers who are by no means as strong physically, or as active intellectually as they once were, and who are nevertheless so entrenched in the affections of their congregations that any suggestion of an approaching severance of the pastoral tie would be instantly and strongly deprecated as a thing unnecessary, ill-advised and unfortunate for the people—and that not on the ground of remembrance of past services, but on account of appreciation of present worth. There is no profession where faithful and unselfish service is as sure as it is in the ministry to meet with its full meed of recognition. The family doctor, or the family lawyer may form very real friendship with those on whose behalf they labor, but the feeling is far from being as general, and is not often as deep as that which binds together pastor and people.

And yet no observant eye can be blind to the facts that, in some cases, young ministers are, on account of their youth, preferred to those who, although they have borne the burden and heat of the day, are still willing, with the Master's help, to endure it for a few years longer. Where this is the case, the reason must be either in the pastor or in the people. I do not think it is usually in the people. We do not hear of these people casting off statesmen or doctors because of advancing years, if these show no sign of being unequal to the duties expected of them. And there is nothing in the work of the ministry which makes youth an especially desirable thing in the one who fulfils its functions; rather on the contrary, there is no line of life where that depth of insight and deepening of spiritual experience, which commonly belong only to old people, are more desirable or more charming. There may be some

cases, it is true, where the young people forming a considerable proportion of the congregation, and compactly banded together in a Christian Endeavor Society or some similar gatherings, vote in unison in virtue of such organization, and when the choice of a pastor is under consideration they thoughtlessly, and without malice prepense, but inspired simply by the sympathy of youth, prefer a young to an old man. It is moreover characteristic of our age which Henry Ward Beecher has called "the age of obedient parents," that fathers and mothers often, in cases where their children are interested, suppress their own judgment and follow the wishes of their children—and so it sometimes happens not so much in the case of retaining elderly pastors as when the choice of a new pastor is to be decided upon, that a young man is preferred because the most enthusiastic and best organized part of the congregation is young.

But without minimizing whatever degree of weight there may be in these considerations, the main cause of the prevailing unrest lies, I suspect, with the ministers. There are pastors, neither few nor obscure and of high character, but who with advancing years have allowed themselves to settle into a rut, whose sermons betray but few traces of either the critical or the devotional study of the Word of God, whose quotations of scripture follow a limited and often trodden circle, whose conversation even shows no freshness of thinking or of expression, and whose whole ministrations in the pulpit and in the pastorate, scarcely touch the life-battles and the heart-aches about them. Such a man discharges his public duties with a regularity and a gravity which leave nothing to be desired, his private life is above reproach, and yet the people become weary of him and hail the prospect of a change to a young, an untried, and personally an immature man, because obvious as his failings are, there is a presumption that he will give his whole self to his work. A recent writer in the *British Weekly* calls attention to the comparatively early age at which ministers on the average cease to buy new books. Whatever the case may be on the other side of the Atlantic, who among us has not noted ministerial libraries, in this age of cheap books, with scarcely a volume published within the last ten or fifteen years? Let it be granted that a few of the old masterpieces in theology and literature, well digested, will work wonders for a man's thinking, the fact remains that the most of us dare not neglect any of the avenues by which inspiration and suggestion may come. We must at any cost keep in touch with the life and the needs of our people, both young and old, and if we do, there will be much less heard about ministers being cast off when they are scarcely past their prime.

In the letter, Mr. Editor, in which you ask me to write on this subject, you ask for suggestions as to the remedies which will lessen or do away with this evil. If my diagnosis is correct, these remedies are evidently not to be of a legislative character. Church courts, directly at least, cannot help us here. In the case of the congregation where the young people, by virtue of numbers and organization carry everything before them, much may be done by the tact and well-planned advice of some of the older members who possess the sympathy of the younger people. For the rest, these considerations but emphasize the often preached doctrine that we must never cease to be students. This paralysis, be it remembered, does not strike old men exclusively, although the subject under discussion has caused the emphasis to be laid upon their danger; young men scarce five years out of college have been stricken and have had unmistakable hints from their congregation that they had passed "the dead line." That line is a movable one and it may be kept indefinitely off by drinking at the fountain of immortal youth, which is within the reach of any Christian. I cannot agree at all, however, with the opinion often offered by writers upon this subject: "Let a man but preach the gospel simply and faithfully and the people will rally round him." Do we not know instances where this has not been the case? Something more is

needed than simplicity and faithfulness. There must be the sympathetic, personal element which makes the truth always fresh. "Goodness which makes itself disagreeable, that is, in this case, dull and unattractive by a monotonous stereotyped expression," is high treason against virtue."

Written for the CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

### THE COMING RELIGION.\*

BY CHARLES DURAND.

I read in my younger days, a great many books on sceptical subjects, and early came to the conclusion that there was very little instruction, and far less real consolation and comfort in them. I used also, many years ago, occasionally to read some novels, with about the same result, for as to the last, I always thought the world was full enough of romance in real life, tragic and farcical, without the inventions of men and women.

The first, I looked upon as leading to death—giving the various conjectures of men about a God and eternal life—after reading which the soul was left in comparative misery—certainly in great mental darkness, and involuntarily ended with the expression we see in the Bible, no man can find out God by reasoning. The second, I verily believe (always, excepting an occasional good book of the imagination), has led to a vast amount of evil among men and women for the past two centuries in civilized countries. We must have a religion, a belief in a Spiritual Ruler of the universe. A man-made religion is like man himself—necessarily evil.

What comes from God is not so, and is intended not for this earth only, but for the whole universe.

Mr. VanNess mentions three kinds of religion or religious thoughts: 1st—The religion of science—human learning—the pride of intellect. 2nd—The religion of love or that of Jesus. The good Nazarene of Judea only a man, you will recollect in his belief. 3rd—The religion of socialism, the humanitarian, or the essential goodness of human nature. The possibility of making men and women good by their own efforts, apart from God's spiritual interposition. Now, the first was tried in Greece, then in Rome, and in modern times, in France, and partially in other countries. It ended in utter corruption, arrogance and spiritual ignorance. Being wise in their own eyes, they became fools, divided into all kinds of beliefs, epicurean, stoical, lascivious and lustful.

The second is on trial in various shapes and phases of religion, but when properly understood and guided by the Holy Ghost, leads to eternal life. By it Jesus has risen from the dead.

The third is on trial in most civilized countries, especially the United States, and prominently in dear old England, under Gladstone. It is needless to say what are its fruits. In America it leads to confusion, anarchy and abominable vice. Jack is as good as his master. Jack of to-day is master, tomorrow, some other Jack will pull him down. Landlords (even the kindest) are detested by this third religious class. Communism, universal destruction of property, levelling the learned with the ignorant, free love, detestation of sacred marriage, easy divorce, disobedient children, suicides, murder and robbery follow in its wake. God is not in it. His name is hated because He is looked upon as a master. What is its end? Tyranny of the many or of the one. The French revolution of 1793 is a picture of it. What it will now turn into is to be seen from the past.

These are the religions of Mr. VanNess and his Unitarianism. These are the religions that are on trial, and he prefers the first and third, and would have these two commingle, but keep an interposing God out of them, and only use Him as a myth in the second, an imagination, not a reality. The world has tried the first and second *ad nauseam*. Rome was a great sink of vice, murder, ambition and ruin, deservedly eaten of its own vices, finally overrun by Northern barbarians.

\* Recently I read a book taken from our Toronto Public Library—a book written by a Unitarian minister, styled "The Coming Religion," by the Rev. Thomas VanNess, of a San Francisco Unitarian church—with a great flourish of language—dedicated to congregations of the same belief in Denver City, and of the State in which he lives.