

thought good to provide such a relief in this form, which must be understood in accordance with its history and manifest intention. The second Homily for Whitsunday says:—"Christ ordained the authority of the keys to *excommunicate* notorious sinners, and to *absolve* them which are truly penitent." And that our church did not stand alone in this matter is evident from the standards of her sisters of the Reformation. Let us take the case of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, both as nearest to us, and as one regarded as ultra-Protestant. The Westminster Confession says: "The Lord Jesus Christ, as King and Head of His Church, hath herein appointed a government in the hands of chief officers distinct from the civil magistrate. To these officers, the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven are committed, by virtue whereof they have power respectively to retain and remit sins; to shut that kingdom against the impenitent, both by the word and censures, and to open it to penitent sinners, by the ministry of the gospel, and by *absolution* from censures, as occasion shall require." The "Constitutions and Observations," published at Edinburgh, in 1709, provide both a form of absolution and of excommunication. John Knox, in his Book of Common Order, prescribed the following words in the form for the removal of censures:—"And (I) pronounce thy sins to be loosed in Heaven."

The attempt made by the sacerdotal party to pervert this form to the support of a system of priestcraft, which our church has emphatically repudiated, is as disingenuous as it is contrary to the facts of history, and the whole tenor of our formularies. Could they, however, establish their contention, it would not weigh one iota in favor of their teaching, which would still remain an unscriptural and unwholesome error, but it would involve the framers of our Prayer Book in the charge of glaring and illogical inconsistency, a charge which we emphatically repudiate.

In the matter of remission and retention of Church censures, the minister acts as an officer of the Church, performing certain ecclesiastical functions relating to admission to or exclusion from the visible church, the congregation of professing Christians. In the matter of pastoral intercourse, the minister comes to his people, and especially to the sick and the troubled, as their friend and counsellor, and the amount of good he will do will not depend upon his ecclesiastical position and authority, but simply upon the extent to which he is possessed by the loving and sympathetic spirit of the Friend of sinners, and the clearness and fervor with which he can bring home the Gospel message to the heart and conscience. The good to be effected and the great blessedness and value of such a pastoral relationship is beyond question. But if the advocates of sacerdotal absolution are asked what good is wrought by this tremendous power they claim, it is somewhat difficult for them to define it. Repentance and faith are all that the Bible declares and all that our church asserts to be necessary to salvation. If a man has truly repented, and believes he has done all that is necessary to salvation, he is a pardoned man. Can the priest, by any absolution, add to his security or affect in the least that man's relation to God? Supposing the priest, instead of remitting, retains his sin, would such retention annul the desired forgiveness, or make a true penitent a lost reprobate? Or, if we suppose the opposite case of an abandoned profligate who comes

to the priest to be absolved; if he does not repent can the priest do ought for him? In spite of all that the priest can do or say, he remains the same bad man he was before. But as soon as he repents and believes, he is a partaker of the Divine Mercy which the priest could neither give nor withhold. So then, what, after all, does this mysterious power accomplish? It cannot absolve the wicked; it cannot hinder or enrich the mercy promised to the penitent. Forgiveness and the retention of sin can be determined only in the court of conscience and by the divine utterances. Man can declare God's wrath against sin, but only God can inflict the wrath upon the sinner. Man can declare God's willingness to forgive, but only the Spirit of Christ can apply that forgiveness. The office of a Christian minister is not that of a judge, or mediator, or one who exercises sacerdotal functions; it is simply that of one who, having himself received mercy, proclaims the unsearchable riches of Christ, and points perishing sinners to the Lamb of God Who taketh away the sin of the world.

THE CITY RELIEF FOR THE INDUSTRIOUS POOR.

An excellent work of practical and beneficent charity is being carried out in Toronto this winter, by the City Poor Relief, under the management of a committee of ladies, by whom the City is divided into districts and every known case of poverty and destitution systematically relieved with food, clothing, fuel.

Our purpose is now to invite the practical co-operation of our readers to one useful branch of this work: The Industrial Room. In order to help the industrious poor, many of whom are willing and anxious to work, this work-room has been established, where plain sewing of all kinds is given out. The management of this work-room is in the hands of a committee of ladies appointed by the City Relief. The Relief Society supplies materials, pays for the work when finished, and either sells it, or in cases of necessitous poverty, gives it away where most wanted.

An appeal is made by the ladies now conducting this good work, asking their fellow-citizens to purchase the work thus done, and also to send orders for sewing to the room on No. 23 Breadalbane St. Every Thursday the ladies will be found there ready to receive orders; on Friday the women come for the work. By so doing, valuable assistance may be given at this inclement season to some poor mothers struggling to maintain their little families, or to battle through the winter with a husband out of work. A number of articles of clothing, aprons, underclothing, and other plain useful articles, are now lying at the rooms for sale, the proceeds of which will be applied to carry on this most useful charity.

THE REGENT RAILWAY ACCIDENT.

The terrible railway accident has cast a deep gloom over Toronto, and the genuine sympathy of the community has expressed itself in the prompt measures taken for the relief of the families of the unfortunate victims. And yet to how very little extent after all can such ministrations bring relief, much less compensation? May the Merciful Father Himself comfort the sufferers and overrule this deplorable

calamity for good. The occasion of the catastrophe adds another tragic element to the awful visitation. It was altogether due, as the responsible party himself confesses, to the unaccountable forgetfulness of one man. This cannot shield him from the punishment due to his offence, much less from the more terrible retribution of his own remorse. But it suggests a few considerations which might tend to the avoidance of similar catastrophes. First, ought there not to be a divided responsibility by which the safety of the train would not be dependent upon the accurate and prompt memory of one man, but upon several, thus diminishing the risk of a lapse of memory which might happen under special circumstances of fatigue, ill-health, or pre-occupation of trouble, to the most careful?

Ought not such a loose train, as that which did the mischief in this case, be required to report at various stations and only proceed from one to another as directed, instead of having apparently a *carte blanche* of the whole distance to be traversed?

Secondly, are not the railways in many cases, responsible for the failure of employees, because of their too great exactions? Through a false principle of economy men are overworked, kept on duty through long stretches of time, until over-fatigue dulls their faculties and unfits them for posts of great responsibility. Whenever this is the case the railway company should be held responsible; and more than pecuniary compensation should be exacted. The offence should be a criminal one and the chief officers responsible for the acts.

The fact that in this case the conductor was a most faithful and efficient officer and had been on duty fifteen hours without intermission, may to some extent explain his mistake and mitigate his guilt. But to whatever extent it does so, it throws the responsibility back upon those under whose orders he was working.

Considering everything, the wonder is not that such an accident should ever occur, but that it occurs so seldom. This speaks volumes for the capability and faithfulness of engineers and train-men.

But there is a large percentage of avoidable accidents; and it is to be hoped that the recent deplorable occurrence may lead the adoption of more stringent measures and efficient safeguards in the running of trains.

The Sunday School.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY, JANUARY 20th, 1884.

BIBLE LESSON.

The Power of the Tongue, Jas. iii. 1-18.

The writer of this epistle was well called "the Just." He was a man pre-eminently honest, earnest, real and well fitted to write such an epistle as this, asserting the necessity of moral rectitude, and vindicating the great principles of morality against religious shams and counterfeits. Among the evils rife amongst those to whom St. James was writing was that of bitter words, wrangling and confusion, the results of a selfish struggle for pre-eminence. The evil is still rife and the Apostle's warning as greatly needed now, as then.

I. The Evil Tongue: verses 1-12.

The apostle utters his warning against a masterful spirit, which loves place and power, and struggles for pre-eminence—"become not many teachers," do not be eager to be teachers and masters. The office should seek the man, not the man the office. The restless