

Dominion Churchman.

THURSDAY, MARCH 23, 1876.

THE USE OF LENT.

One of the important uses to which this season may be and indeed ought to be applied is the acquirement of religious knowledge. As we have already remarked, it has for a long time been specially selected as a suitable opportunity for bringing before the Church the main features of Christianity as embodied in the teaching of the Church. Not such a Christianity as we have sometimes seen and heard of, which has been evolved out of the inner consciousness of men who acknowledge no higher teaching; or if they profess a kind of subjection to Holy Writ yet submit everything to the aforesaid inner consciousness:—but the Christianity the church has always received as that which Christ Himself in his teachings or institutions either expressly declares or certainly sanctions—the Christianity we find in the Divine Scriptures which embodies identically the same principles as those we find exemplified and arranged for daily application in our Book of Common Prayer. Much of the instability of Christians arises from their lamentable ignorance of the Bible, the name of which they cast up at every turn; as much of the instability of Churchmen is caused by their total ignorance of some of the most valuable portions of their own Prayer Book. They may talk about the Bible being their Rule of Faith; but in constructing their system, if they have any, they are content to quote isolated texts, and to “wrest” the epistles of St. Paul, “as they do also the other Scriptures,” from their true meaning; while they forget that the dogmatic teaching of the whole Bible and of the Church in her undivided state was one and the same. They indulge in empty talk about the Reformation, and confine their attention to the purely negative aspect of our Reformers’ aims—opposition to Papal encroachment and to Roman error—while they forget that the object of that great religious movement in England in the sixteenth century was far less negative than it was positive; and that its promoters were quite as anxious to secure its Catholicity, its identity in character and claims with the primitive Church, as they were to make it anti-papal. Now the present time is well adapted for a close study of the Sacred Scriptures and the Book of Common Prayer, so as to endeavor to seize on the principles on which their several parts are constructed, and the harmony running through the whole. Other books should also be studied as opportunity offers; such as *Kip’s Double Witness*, *Wordsworth’s Theophilus Anglicanus*—which would give to our people some idea of the claim their Church has upon their affectionate regard.

A strong effort should be made especially during Lent, and with the aid

of Divine grace, in the use of the appointed means, to overcome our particular infirmities. And we ought at this season, to practise some self denial that will enable us to make large offers in the work of the Church, which is the cause of Christ. With some, this cannot be done; but there are multitudes with whom the practice would be very easy. The *Standard of the Cross* says:—“There is a certain fashionable observance of Lent which may have its sanitary advantages; but it is difficult to see that fish on Friday is a means of grace. But the practice of domestic economy during Lent, that we may have larger means for doing good, is an observance that is by all means to be commended.” We would not, nevertheless, depreciate abstinence from the more exciting and stimulating articles of food, when the object is understood to be that facilities may be afforded for “keeping the body under,” after the example of St. Paul.

FOREIGN MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

One reproach at least, has been rolled away from the Church in the Diocese of Toronto. In primitive times one of the first aspects Christianity assumed was a zealous effort to extend the blessings of the gospel to the regions beyond the local habitation of its possessors; and no modern phase of our religion has had the slightest claim to the attention of mankind, or the least prospect of enduring success without incorporating foreign missions into its system, and that in an early stage of its progress.

The Church in Canada has begun an organization in the Diocese of Toronto, which is intended, when the Provincial Synod meets, to be a branch of the work undertaken by the whole Church in Canada, and directed by that Synod. At present the subscriptions paid into the general fund will be devoted to the Church’s work in the diocese of Algoma, unless the said subscriptions are expressly intended for some other branch of missionary work. We cannot imagine any objection that can be raised to the movement itself, or to the regulations that have been made. Indeed we may say that we have scarcely ever met with anything of the kind that has been managed so adroitly as to obviate any objection that could be raised, and to meet every requirement that might present itself in the prosecution of so noble an enterprise of the Church in this country. In our issue of the 9th inst. will be found the constitution and declaration of the Diocesan Society that has been formed, which we take from the *Toronto Diocesan Gazette*, having accidentally met with a copy of it. We should have been most happy to have published the whole proceedings sooner than we did, if a copy had been furnished to us.

ERASTIANISM.

Erastianism is no more palatable to Methodists, Presbyterians or Baptists, than it is to Ritualists, High Churchmen, or to consistent and honest Evangelicals; although some of the former are remarkably fond of invoking the power of the State against the Church, and make no secret of the triumph they think has been gained by several decisions of what are really Civil Courts, in Church matters. In one breath, they accuse us, and not without some cause, that we have no discipline for our private members. In another, they gloat over the adverse result, in a civil court, of the trial of a clergyman who has been conscientious enough to endeavour to the best of his ability to exercise the very small modicum of discipline the Church has left to her. They stigmatize such attempts as “intolerant assumptions,” “petty tyranny,” “petty persecutions of narrow minded men, who deem themselves lords over God’s heritage;” with a great deal more of the slang phraseology which has formed their principal stock in trade for the last half century. They want to run at large through our churches, and over our church yards, each sect accommodating our time-honoured institutions to its own purposes. They call in the aid of the law to make the Church subservient to their own separate and sectarian uses; and then where is the wonder if we are somewhat open to the objection that our discipline is defective, and that several variations in creed are admissible within our pale? And yet the universe is thrown into a ferment if the state should dare attempt to interfere with their own internal arrangements, even when such interference would result in their improvement. Several such instances have occurred within the limits of our observation, and the extreme sensitiveness of these bodies, in reference to state control, is truly amusing. One of our contemporaries, in an article on Erastianism, says that “as long as the Church looks to the state for its support, it must surrender to the state the privilege of supreme control.” We cannot imagine to what branch of the Church these words are appropriate. They cannot belong to the Church of England; for, as we have stated in another article, her endowments and an immense amount of property besides, which the state has laid its sacrilegious hands upon, all came from the people; and therefore the dictum of our contemporary is no more applicable to the Church of England than it is to the Congregationalists, or the Latter Day Saints. The whole secret is very compactly given in the statement made by Mr. Disraeli some years ago, when he said that the Church in England was too powerful a corporation for the state to allow it to have the sole control of its own affairs.