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The Canada Presbyterian.

TORONTO, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15th, 1891.

THE speaker of the British House of Commons put a member down the other day for prolixity. What a pity it is that speakers of Canadian Parliaments, Moderators of Synods and Assemblies, Presidents of Conferences and other presiding officers on this side of the Atlantic are not endowed with similar power. One feels this as the month of June comes near.

THE momentous fact was cabled across the Atlantic the other day and announced in the daily papers that Parnell and Maurice Healey met at the door of the Parliament house but did not speak. When will this wretched tattle about Parnellites and anti-Parnellites end? Who cares a straw whether these men spoke or not. Why such stuff should be cabled is as great a mystery as the publication of the rubbish by respectable newspapers when it arrives.

IT is not easy for many people to decide on the proper mental attitude towards a Parnell defeat. Of course it is a pleasant thing to see a man of Parnell's character beaten by hundreds at the polls, but every defeat is a triumph for the priests. The hierarchy are against him and were it not for the hierarchy the ex-leader would probably win or at all events not always lose. It is pretty hard for a man who wants to see leprous public men punished and at the same time see the power of the priesthood minimized at elections to decide how he ought to feel over the result at Kilkenny and Sligo.

A MAN charged with any offence has in these days to stand three distinct trials. First, he is tried by the newspapers, then by the general public, then by a court of some kind. Not unfrequently the trial by public opinion comes long before the trial by a court. The people say whether a man is guilty or not as soon as the newspapers have laid the story before them, often in a grossly exaggerated form. Dr. Briggs is having his trial by the newspapers at the present time and will in all probability be found guilty. The trial by the people will follow and sometime next May the General Assembly will probably take up the case. Might it not be as well to dispense with civil and ecclesiastical courts altogether and let the reporters and the general public dispense justice.

IT did not require the noble addresses delivered by Drs. Hall and Taylor at the funeral of Dr. Howard Crosby, nor the eulogiums passed upon the deceased minister by the religious press to prove that abuse never injures a really good man. For years Dr. Crosby has stood between two fires. The sworn and strong enemy of the saloon and the gambling den, the blackguardism of the city did its worst against him. But Dr. Crosby was not a prohibitionist and the extreme wing of the prohibition party assailed him often and fiercely. The combined assaults did him no appreciable injury. His congregation paid no attention to the abuse, his Church bestowed her highest honours upon him, and the best citizens of New York watched at his bedside and wept at his bier. If a reasonably good man can do any useful work and keeps on doing it with a reasonable degree of success the abuse of a "reptile" press or of a fanatical crowd never hurts him.

A LITERARY critic writing in the *British Weekly* has this to say about "Canada and the Canadian Question":—

Goldwin Smith's incomparably brilliant and trenchant style compels one to read him on every subject he takes up,

from the Conditioned to Canada. Messrs. Macmillan issue his gathered wisdom on the latter in a handsome volume, "Canada and the Canadian Question," which I have just received. The price is eight shillings nett. Glancing hastily through it, one recognizes views already familiar in the *By-stander*, and the undimmed sword-gleam. Mr. Smith has given up to Canada what was meant for mankind, but he ingeniously pleads that Canada is a very large country.

Yes, Canada is a large country and the Canadian questions Mr. Smith discusses are quite important enough for his pen or that of any other writer however brilliant his style or undimmed his sword-gleam. Moreover it is not a fact that Mr. Smith has "given up" his brilliant pen to Canada. He writes quite frequently on British and American questions and on topics supposed to be of interest to mankind. Has Canada any special interest in the "Conditioned"?

IF the deficit in our Home Mission Fund is not wiped out by the time the books are closed we may probably hear something next June and between the 30th inst. and June about the "enormous extent of our Home Mission field," "too much undertaken," "Committee not acting prudently," etc., etc. Yes, we have a large Home Mission field and we should be thankful for it. It is constantly growing and we ought to be thankful for that too. What would a Church amount to in a new country like ours if we had no Home Mission field? Would we be faithful to Christ, faithful to our Church, faithful to what we believe to be the truth, if we were not sending the Gospel to every corner of Canada where our people are to be found? A Church without Home Mission work would be about as prosperous as a lawyer without clients, or a doctor without patients, or a merchant without customers. We should glory in our great mission field rather than groan about it. What better work can the Church be doing than laying the foundations of Presbyterianism in the newer parts of Canada. No Church on earth has greater opportunities. God has given no Church more hopeful and inspiring work. Let every loyal Presbyterian rejoice in his Home Mission field and thank God every day for giving us the privilege of doing good work. Those Churches that have no work to do soon die from dry rot.

THE Presbytery of Toronto did a wise thing the other day when it declined to authorize its committee on temperance to circulate petitions for signature among the members of Knox Church, Toronto, after the Session had refused to do so. If a Session errs there is a constitutional way of rectifying the error. To go behind a Session and do among the people what the Session for reasons satisfactory to its members has declined to do, would soon produce most serious consequences. In fact no Session composed of spirited men would hold office if their action were to be set aside on the recommendation of committees. In this case the intention of the committee was no doubt praiseworthy. All aimed at was to give the people of Knox Church an opportunity to sign a petition in favour of prohibition. That opportunity can be had at a less cost than over-riding the deliverance of the Session. In fact anybody anxious to sign such petitions can find a dozen of them any day of the week. Principal Rainy remarked not long ago that the Church has more influence and less authority now than it ever had. If the moral influence of a Presbytery cannot induce Sessions to move in any direction there is not much use in trying authority. A Session has a perfect right to say what petitions it will circulate for signature and no wise Presbytery will interfere with its action in such matters.

SO much is said these days about the baneful influences of denominations and the marvellous advantages organic union would be sure to bring that one is almost tempted to think sometimes that the Reformation was a mistake. The Church was one a few centuries ago and we used to be taught that splitting it was one of the most glorious events the world ever saw. Now the trend is all the other way. If the fragments, Catholic and Protestant, Calvinistic and Arminian could be gathered up and welded together again all would be well. But this organic union question is not the only one that suggests the possibility of a past mistake. The air is full of speculation about the future of Canada. As we are, Imperial Federation, Independence, Annexation are all more or less discussed. Mr. Blake is probably working out a plan of his own which he may lay before the public in due time. The advocates of each proposed plan rarely fail to say that

the country will go to pieces if their plan for the future is not adopted. Amidst this Babel of political talk and prophecy of blue ruin one is sometimes tempted to ask was it not a mistake to take this country from the Indians. The Red man was not a progressive citizen but he did not spend all his time and strength discussing his future. Supposing we all take the advice of the *Halifax Witness* and attend to our duties a little better and say less about our destiny. Above all things let one-half of the press and people stop calling the other half such ugly names as boodlers, traitors, rebels, etc. If these charges are true it makes very little difference what form of political existence may be in store for us.

MEETING OF THE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE IN ITALY.

THE meeting of the Evangelical Alliance in Florence last week will no doubt exercise a great and beneficent influence on Christian thought and life in Italy. It has been hopefully anticipated. Many distinguished men belonging to different sections of the Evangelical Church are among the delegates. It has often been matter for regret that so many different Churches have organized scattered missions in the Italian kingdom instead of combining their efforts among a people who are not in a position to understand the reasons for separation. The boasted unity, the oneness of organization, of the Roman Catholic Church has prevented the people from making due allowance for the differences of view existing among Protestants. The fragmentary character of Protestantism has steadily been kept before their view as a mark of apostasy. Wherever the Roman Church is strong the same argument is plied, much to the bewilderment of those who cannot comprehend why there should be so many divisions among professing Christians. The meeting of the Evangelical Alliance on Italian soil may do something to correct the wrong impression so sedulously fostered, and dispel some of the prejudices so long entertained. An assemblage of the nature of the Evangelical Alliance will necessarily attract attention and arouse comment. It will help to develop a spirit of enquiry that will lead many to a favourable consideration of Gospel truth.

The last number of the *New York Observer* contains the larger portion of a paper by Dr. Philip Schaff which was read at the Florence meeting. It takes a large view of the relation of the Roman Catholic Church to the Italian people. Interesting as it is in many respects, and full of excellent suggestions as it is, it will hardly meet with universal approval. He passes in review rapidly the privileges acquired since Italian unity has been an accomplished fact. He then argues for a form of religion that will in a measure be distinctively Italian. He puts his view in this way:—

We cannot expect or wish Italy to become Protestant, but we do hope and pray that she may become evangelical and Christian in the best sense of the term. She will not ought not to turn the back on her glorious past, to disown the immortal works of her literature and art, to break with her Catholic traditions, and to import a foreign religion which is not congenial to her genius and taste. She wants a religion that will in some way combine the best elements of the Renaissance and the Reformation, with the best features of Catholicism.

The Liberals of Italy are dissatisfied with the Church of their ancestors, and have no leaning to the sects of foreigners, but they are not, on that account, destitute of religion; they have a religion of their own, which will kindle into a flame of enthusiasm when the Spirit of God, through some inspired prophets, shall blow the breath of life into the dry bones and clothe them with flesh and blood.

There must be a possibility of harmonizing the highest civilization with the highest virtue and piety. There must be a way of reconciling the Protestant, the Catholic and the Rationalistic rules of authority. The Bible, the Church and enlightened reason are not necessarily antagonistic. The Bible, as containing the Word of God, is, and must remain, the supreme rule of faith; the Church of God is and will remain the guardian, propagator and expounder of the Bible; reason, the greatest natural gift of God to man, is the organ by which alone we can understand and appropriate the teaching of the Bible and the Church.

Is this eclectic system, supposed to be the ideal religion for Italy, a possibility or only a vague and impossible dream? Is it at all probable that the Roman Catholic Church will merge its individuality in this Church of the future? History records the success of no such attempt in the past. Not a few of the best and noblest minds in the Romish communion have projected some such compromise in times gone by, but the results do not justify any sanguine anticipation of better success in days to come. Rome declares its policy to be unalterable. It must be as it is; it distinctly avows the impossibility of compromise. It may change its attitude as