

## THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

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TORONTO, WEDNESDAY, JULY 23, 1884.

AFTER settling some business matters the P. n-Presbyterian Council sat down to a regular course of essay reading. The managing committee had invited so many distinguished men to prepare papers on important subjects that there was little time to do anything but read them. Whether the Council can live long under any circumstances is a question sometimes asked, but longevity is an impossibility without discussion. It is admitted on all hands that the body has no very definite or practical object in meeting except to arm each other up by discussing great themes. If the discussion simply consists in reading papers, however good the papers and great their authors the days of the Council are numbered. Clergymen and Professors are not so fond of listening to each other read that they will long go round the world for that purpose alone. A man takes far more interest in a paper when he knows that as soon as it is read he may dip to his oratorical oar. Half the papers would suit much better than the whole.

THE celebration of Spurgeon's fiftieth birthday has set a large number of critics at work to find out the secret of the great preacher's marvellous power. The task is not an easy one. Indeed it is impossible to name the qualities that make Spurgeon what he is. He has a vast amount of consecrated zeal, but so have hundreds of other men. He has great common sense and first class organizing power, but many others have these qualities in as great a degree. Hundreds of comparatively unknown men have more learning. He preaches the Gospel, but so do thousands of other preachers. One critic asserts that his great and long continued success arises mainly from the fact that he preaches in ordinary English and not in the stiff, stilted, technical language so frequently heard in the pulpit in all countries. Undoubtedly there is some force in this view. Take up any one of his thousands of sermons and read any paragraph, and you find a nervous, lucid, direct style of address. One feels that sermon was spoken by a living man to other men in whom he had an undying interest. It is the very antithesis of the essay style. A preacher reading one of those sermons cannot help asking himself, "Is it possible to preach a sermon in that style and write it?" He don't believe that it is. Spurgeon himself could not do it. One element at least of his long continued power is his ability to treat spiritual truths just as John Bright or Gladstone or any other great orator handles secular truth.

IT is constantly charged against one of the great political parties that it calls itself "Reform" but has no reform platform. It is no part of our duty to say how much truth—if any—there is in this charge. We do desire, however, to call the attention of both parties to a number of urgent questions that lie on the borderland between politics and morality that any statesman of either party might render good service to the country by taking up. We briefly touched upon some of these in our last issue, and consider them of such importance that we refer to them again. They have nothing to do with the N. P. or the Boundary Award, but some of them are of much more importance than either.

FOR example, we need a better law at present for the prevention of Sabbath desecration. Undoubtedly a large majority of the people of this Dominion desire to have one day in seven as a day of rest. Any respectable public man who took this matter in hand would not only discharge a duty—he would win the respect of three-fourths of the best people in the Dominion. Of course there are difficulties to be over-

come, but any great question is beset with difficulties. There is a field here for any good man who wishes to serve his country well.

A LARGE majority of the people of Ontario would like to see some new regulations made in regard to the use of the Bible as a class-book in our public schools. This subject is ripe for legislation. The large religious bodies are substantially agreed. Why should not some prominent statesman of Ontario bring down a good practical measure on this subject?

WE think we know one reason why our best public men do not take as much interest in such questions as we think they might do. Electors who also profess to be Christians never give a man credit for a measure that does not savour of party. Supposing a public man of one party brought in a good Sabbath law, men calling themselves Christians would work up feeling against him at the next election on account of that very law, if they could make a little miserable political capital by so doing. This is a most humiliating fact, but it is a fact all the same. Too many of our people are politicians first, and temperance men, sabbatarians and Christians afterwards. There is precious little encouragement for men to legislate on moral questions if the good laws they pass are to be used in defeating them at the polls.

## CHURCH MUSIC.

ONE thing in the Presbyterian Church in Canada that affords great room for improvement is sacred music. A hopeful sign of advance in this divine art is the attention that is being devoted to the subject. People are becoming more alive to its importance, and various efforts are being made to bring about a much needed reform. Music has its attractions for all classes of people, hence the readiness in some country districts to welcome the visits of the peripatetic musical adventurer who opens his singing classes in the rural school houses, and affords, if nothing better, an agreeable pastime for the young people during the long winter evenings. The singing school of earlier days is rapidly becoming a reminiscence of the past. Its usefulness is gone. It would be well if it were replaced by some more efficient means of stimulating and directing the musical education of the young.

Our comprehensive system of education very properly makes provision to a limited extent for teaching music in the public schools. This important branch of culture might with advantage be considerably extended. Besides being helpful in awakening a love for music, and laying a good foundation for subsequent advances, it would afford a welcome and agreeable respite for the monotonous grind to which the pupils of these days are subjected.

There is a noticeable improvement in the general appreciation of high-class music by the community. An oratorio, for instance, is not now listened to with ill-concealed weariness, or, as was not infrequently the case, under the pleasing fiction of listening to the music the people seemed to entertain the opinion that its chief purpose was to provide an artistic background for a rattling fire of silly chatter. That has well nigh disappeared, and most auditors seem to catch the spirit of the inspiring strains.

The importance of music in the highest sphere to which it can be applied—the service of God—is demonstrated by the prominent place it has assumed in all great religious movements. Its influence was powerfully and immediately felt during the early days of the Reformation. Luther's fondness for music is proverbial. The Wesleys gave it special prominence in the great revival that issued in the founding of Methodism. In our own time, we have seen the grand effects produced by the consecrated musical talent of Ira D. Sankey.

Many are of opinion that Presbyterians have not given the service of praise the attention they should. It may be that they are not behind some of their neighbours in this respect, but such consolation—if consolation it be—is at best but negative. It would be wrong to say that it has been indifferent on the question of sacred music, but it is undeniable that in too many instances there is a lamentable indifference to what ought to be one of the brightest and most impressive parts of sacred worship. The cultivation of music generally has tended to the development of a more artistic taste, but as yet it has almost failed to

benefit the service of sacred song. One effect, temporary it is to be hoped, is that in large city congregations, where music has in many ways been improved, the congregation do not join in the singing. They prefer to listen admiringly to the finely trained voices of the choir, and the organ accompaniment. They seem to be afraid to swell the volume of praise lest they mar a fine performance. This has an injurious effect. Spiritually minded worshippers feel as if this was a perversion of public worship. To them it appears to be the substitution of an artistic performance for the heart-felt and solemn out-pouring of the soul in sacred song as an act of sacred worship. The expectation seems reasonable that such a state of things is transitional. The more general diffusion of musical culture will make it for the body of worshippers "a pleasant thing to sing praises to our God."

As evidence that the importance of the subject is felt in connection with the services of the Presbyterian Church, it may be instanced that the Hymnal Committee have just issued a Psalter with music selected and arranged under most careful and competent supervision. The Synod of Hamilton and London at its last meeting devoted some time to the consideration of the subject, and in accordance with a recommendation made by them the Hymnal Committee at the General Assembly, on receiving a guarantee, promised to issue an edition with the tonic-sol-fa notation. As the action of the Synod referred to made a move in the right direction, the following extract from the minutes of proceedings may be here transcribed:

Mr F. B. Stewart, from the committee appointed at last Synod, gave in the report on Congregational Psalmody. The report was received and the recommendations of the report considered *seriatim* and the following adopted:

"That the committee be re-appointed with instructions to carry out as far as practicable the following suggestions made in reply to their circular. 1. The appointment of one or more teachers of singing to visit such congregations as may apply for them, and organize classes under the direction of the committee, and accompanied by addresses on Psalmody. 2. Encouraging congregations to use the tonic-sol-fa method of teaching as an excellent and simple means of securing proficiency in musical knowledge. 3. Encouraging leaders of Psalmody to qualify themselves for the efficient discharge of their important duties. 4. That ministers within the bounds of the Synod be recommended to bring the subject of praise frequently before their congregations, and that they use their influence to secure the adoption in every congregation of the Scottish Psalter, the book of Psalm Tunes, about to be published by the Assembly's Committee. 5. That a petition be sent to the Minister of Education, calling his attention to the importance of having singing taught in all our public schools.

## THE CENTRAL INDIA MISSION.

RECENT communications from Central India do not show that any better understanding between our missionaries and the state officials has been reached. No new facts have come to light. It seems that the hostility of the local native authorities is becoming more bitter and relentless. The operations of the missionaries are hampered and interfered with at every turn. Crowds listening to their instructions in the open air have been dispersed in a rough and violent manner, the missionaries themselves being insulted and rudely treated. Even those coming for instruction to the house of the missionary have been driven away. Remonstrance hitherto has been in vain. Access has been sought to the Maharajah Holkar. It was supposed that an interview with the native ruler would have led to some kind of an understanding by which the missionaries could have continued their work without molestation and the people of Indore been granted the exercise of religious liberty. To applications for such interviews an obdurate silence is maintained.

The Canadian Missionaries in Central India have faithfully continued their work as opportunity offered. They have been contending for a valuable principle. They have been fighting not only their own battle but that of the missionary cause there. They have laboured to secure to the people of the Native States freedom of conscience and religious toleration. Very properly they have declined to act on the timid counsel to give up the contest and go elsewhere. Following such advice too often enables a bad cause to triumph, and it takes years to recover lost ground. If Holkar succeeds in shutting the Gospel out of Indore, other native rulers will be ready to follow his example, and the cause of Christian truth in the native states of India would be greatly hindered. The missionaries