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The Great Gift.

There are two great thoughts of religion for which our fathers contended manfully, and which we still believe to be of the essence of the faith. These two are closely connected, intimately interwoven. First, salvation is a gift not an achievement; and second, religion is an inward life not an outward ceremony. These great truths may be regarded as mere intellectual dogmas over which theologians dispute, or they may be held in a crude, superficial way, but rightly construed they pierce to the very heart of things. The Christ is Himself a gift, John iii, 16, a great gift springing out of a great love and creating for man a great opportunity; for faith in this greatest gift brings eternal life. In harmony with this He says: "I give unto them eternal life and no man shall ever pluck them out of my hands." This is the great gift for which men have hungered—more life and fuller. Not merely some place of comfort or some fragment of knowledge, but the life itself.

The language of the Saints has always been "as the hart panteth after the waterbrooks so panteth my soul after thee, O God; my soul thirsteth for God." This is not a future life, or a mere extension of this life, it is the life of a higher, holiersphere. It is a word the Christ-life. He lived in this world and entered into all its sorrows and joys; no life ever entered so deep into all that is pure and human here; yet no life was ever so unworldly. It was not moved by the ambitions and did not seek the prizes of this world. It was first the life of heaven brought down to earth, and then the life of earth lifted up to heaven, and this is the eternal life He will give to His own. This is not only a great gift, it is the only gift that can satisfy; it has in itself salvation and heaven; it can create character and impart peace. "He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again, but he that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." The gift is to abide within us as a source sweetness and strength.

There is a "boom" in organs just now north of the Tweed. At least four churches have been enriched within the past few weeks by the "kist o' whistles."

The General Assembly.

Central Church, Hamilton, has been the Mecca for many Presbyterian pilgrims during the past week. There is now congregated within its walls a body of men that for moral earnestness cannot be surpassed. Great issues and small are being discussed, but the great do not monopolize attention, nor are small side-tracked. Each is carefully appreciated, and treated accordingly. The end sought is not the success of this or that measure, or the gain of the one party or the other, but the triumph of what is right. Even the casual observer is impressed with this pervading spirit of downright sincerity.

It is a representative body that has gathered from every quarter of the Dominion. Not in the narrow sense that each commissioner represents a Presbytery or congregation, and its interests only, but rather in the broad sense that he represents Presbyterianism in Canada. True, the Halifax man is expected to advocate the views of the East, but only that the Church may stand for a moment with him to look at matters from that view-point. He in turn will stand with the Church at the point of view of the Western man, and when all have spoken, will cast his vote, not as an Eastern man, but as one of the great Church in Canada.

Perhaps nowhere is the democracy seen to better advantage than in the Presbyterian Assembly. Its first action is the selection of one from the floor of the Assembly to preside over its deliberations. When chosen he is given all honor while in the Moderator's chair, but at other times he is but a commissioner as the rest are, and the rural elder from Blankville will walk down street with the Moderator, and express the views that his unaccustomed tongue refused to utter in the public meeting. And the Moderator listens with all respect to the rugged thought in its homespun garb.

But that which strikes the outsider most forcibly is the deeply religious tone pervading the meetings of Assembly. There is no flippancy. At no time does the Assembly forget itself. It is saved from this, not by any outwardly beautiful form, for the proceedings are marked with the utmost simplicity, not merely by an inherent sense of the dignity of the Church, but rather by a nature which is itself deeply religious, and which treats all things pertaining to religion as sacred.

A new church was opened for the Tooting (London) congregation, the pastor of which is Rev. P. M. F. McLeod, formerly of the Central Church, Toronto, early in the month. At the same time a new organ was inaugurated. The church has been constructed from American designs, and, it is claimed, introduces a new departure in church architecture into the old land.

The Sabbath.

Our fathers often quoted the text, "Call the Sabbath a delight," a precept far too little regarded at the present time. Professing Christians are somewhat to blame in this. They need to show such a method of spending Sunday as shall attract and lead the careless and scornful to desire to have the same joys. For this cultivation is needed. They should acquire such a frame of mind that the awakening thought on the Lord's day should be jubilant, as of rising from the sepulchre of worldly cares to the sunshine of the garden of communion with the risen Lord. They should seek in public worship to be influenced by the spiritual, not the aesthetic. They should cultivate a pleasure in religious conversation. In their reading they should acquire a taste for works of divinity, "the queen of sciences," as it has been termed, and especially for the marvellous old book which is a perennial joy to the believing student. They need, too, to know the way to the mount of communion, whence when they return, their faces shine from illumined minds and incandescent hearts within. In short, the need of the hour is less discussion on the question, and more example of the best and happiest method of keeping the Sabbath. The testimony of every age, as left in its songs of praise, asserts that the Sabbath is the pearl of days, and in its wise observance is found the fullest happiness upon earth and the foretaste of heaven described as the eternal Sabbath.

In holy duties let the day
In holy pleasures pass away,
How sweet a Sabbath thus to spend
In hope of one that ne'er shall end.

A Forgotten Persecution.

Dr. Balfour's book on colonial Presbyterianism recalls to memory an extraordinary series of occurrences in the island of Madeira about fifty years ago which supplies a conclusive answer to those who maintain that the days of murderous persecution by Romanists have passed never to return. When it was found that Protestantism was making considerable progress among the Roman Catholic population through the labors of a Christian physician, Dr. Kalley, the authorities set to work to crush the movement by force. The evening schools for adults, which had been started by Dr. Kalley, and had proved very useful, were closed. Two Portuguese who had received communion in the Presbyterian Church of Funchal were excommunicated. People were forbidden to give them fire, water, bread, or any other thing that might be necessary to them for their support, or to pay them their debts. Dr. Kalley was imprisoned, and bail was refused on the ground that the crimes laid to his charge were punishable with death. A Protes-