

The Canadian Independent

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TORONTO, JAN. 20th 1881.

REV. A. HANNAY.

OUR friend the Secretary of the English Congregational Union, who won golden opinions from all with whom he came in contact, both in Canada and the States, has had a very hearty welcome accorded him on his return home, and has been telling somewhat of his trans-atlantic experiences and impressions to the gentlemen who "stay at home at ease." We should like to have reprinted his speech entire, but as it would fill every line of space in one week's issue and leave some over until the next, we must be content with culling a few extracts on such points as will be most likely to interest us, premising that the speech was from first to last the speech of a man of keen observation, who had gone about with his eyes open, fresh, sparkling with wit and humor, sarcastic at times, and yet full of the milk of human kindness. We use the reports of the *Nonconformist* and *Christian World*, extracting from each as best serves our purpose. The meeting was held in the Memorial Hall, Farringdon St., a spot made familiar to many by the meetings held there during the week of the Sunday School Centenary Celebration in London. The welcome took place on Tuesday, 21st Dec. The Chairman of the Union, Dr. Newth, a large representation of ministers and laymen, also Dr. Dexter, the editor of the *Boston Congregationalist*, and Chairman of the late Congregational Council at St. Louis. The chair was occupied by James Spicer, Esq. We pass over the introductory speeches and take at once the utterances of Mr. Hannay:—

The Rev. A. Hannay, who was most cordially received, the whole audience rising to their feet to welcome him, said: Mr. Spicer, Ladies and Gentlemen, I have not interpreted this as an occasion for indulgence to any considerable extent in personal reminiscence of travel, nor as an occasion on which I should seek to find complete and elaborate expression for the thankfulness I feel for the kindness I have received at the hands of the committee at whose instance I crossed the Atlantic, for the kindness I received at the hands of friends in America, or for the exceptional and embarrassing kindness which I have just received at your hands. The warmth, not to say the enthusiasm, with which I was received both in Canada and the United States I ascribed entirely to the credentials I bore as your representative, and the generous cordiality of this welcome to-night I ascribe in like manner to your knowledge of the fact that, having gone forth and spoken in your name to your kindred beyond the sea, I bring back with me their answer to your fraternal message.

The following is his reference and testimony to the Canadian Churches and their pastors:

I have referred, Sir, to Canada, and I regret that here I can do little more than refer to it. I shall have an opportunity, I trust, at some meeting of the committee

of the Colonial Missionary Society, of reporting in regard to the Canadian churches, but it would hardly be generous, if just, indeed, to our brethren of the Canadian territory if I allowed this more public opportunity to pass without saying that, though the churches of our order in that territory are not numerous, though the comparatively small number of churches that exists have a comparatively small membership, though they are surrounded and pressed upon by powerful organizations, organizations which, upon the whole, represent churches whose fidelity to Evangelical truth cannot be impugned, they have rendered important service to the religious life of the colony by the fidelity of their pastors as preachers of the Gospel of Christ and by the testimony they have upheld to Scriptural doctrine in regard to the membership, and constitution, and government of the churches. And I am old-fashioned enough, Sir, to think that this should be spoken of in these times as a matter of little less than secondary moment.

Speaking of the constant demand in the States for an address, or for "a few words," on every occasion, he says:—

"I had been prepared by many rumours that had reached me for excellent speaking in the United States, and much of it, but I confess I was not prepared for the abnormal and insatiable appetite for oratory which I found in all the places I visited. I speak of it here rather in the way of warning to my brethren on the platform and elsewhere who may propose to visit America, that they should take a carpet bag with them filled with speeches and have one always ready for explosion. I had ample opportunity, as I have said, of delivering my message at Lowell, where the annual meeting of the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions was held, at St. Louis, where the Triennial Council held its sitting, not to speak of academic and city clubs; clerical and mixed, in meetings statutory and *pro rata*. I spoke to them out of the fulness of my heart, and said to them, in your name, that England is proud of America as a mother of a stalwart and well-doing son, though there be at times things in the bearing and conduct of that son which sorely puzzle her aged brain. And especially in your name I felt called upon to say that the Congregationalists of England regard the Congregationalists of America as their nearest spiritual kindred, that the names of their great preachers, their scholars, their authors, are household words among us, as they are among them, and that we ingeniously thank God for the great service they have rendered to the human race in the Church and in the State.

About the American people he says:—

It does not lie within the range of my purpose to speak at all of the American people as a whole: it would be a big subject. There is something in my heart, however, I could wish to say with regard to the American people as a whole, and I do not know that I shall have any better opportunity than this of saying it. The cordial affection which I found in the assemblies of Congregationalists towards their brethren of the Old World, though, no doubt, colored by the sympathies which influence them as Congregationalists, I could not regard as a manifestation of a sectional American feeling, but rather, if I may so phrase it, as a sectional expression of a general American sentiment. The typical Yankee of the New York morning journal, the political wire-puller, has been held to speak for America, and reveal all that is in her heart. The typical Yankee, Sir—I looked in America for this ungainly compound of arrogance and vulgarity, and I failed to find him. I am not prepared to say that he does not exist, for it was

impossible for me, industrious as I was, to interview every individual American, but he is no more representative of the American people, as you find them engaged in the business of life in America, than that consummate product of a late mysterious dispensation in the political life of England, the Jingo, is of the modern Englishman. The great masses of the American people—the men who form the solid and stable centre of the American nationality, not the religious people merely, though the religious people pre-eminently, but also the enlightened citizens, the great body of the citizens of America who sustain the industries, who ultimately determine and guide the counsels of the Republic, are fair-minded and honorable men, and specially, I believe, their feelings towards England is one of admiration and good will.

The Congregationalists of America are spoken of as follows:—

But it is my business to speak mainly of the Congregationalists of America. I am not prepared to assume that there is among you, with regard to your brethren in America, the same amount or kind of ignorance that I found reported, not of any community in America, but of a gentleman occupying a somewhat high position, I believe, in the city of New York. This gentleman was spoken to of a meeting which I was expected to attend and enlighten about English Congregationalism. "English Congregationalism," he said, "I did not know there was such a thing; I thought Congregationalism was a Yankee notion." This worthy gentleman, I have no doubt, believed that my friend Dr. Dexter invented Congregationalism and held a patent for it. There are 3,674 churches, 3,585 pastors and ministers, and 382,920 church members, being about 104 members to each church. The increase during the last twenty-five years, steady and constant through all that time, has been about 100 per cent. Congregationalists are apt to be at a disadvantage in numerical estimates when compared with most other churches, because of their restriction of the privilege of membership to those who make a credible profession of personal faith in Christ Jesus, a rule of fellowship which our brethren in America have maintained, I believe, with resolute fidelity, though not they by any means alone.

[The remainder of this article is crowded out. It will appear next week. Ed.]

Correspondence

TO CORRESPONDENTS. We cannot ensure the insertion of any matter in the week's issue reaching us later than the Monday preceding. The Editor is not responsible for the opinions of Correspondents.

"OUR PRESBYTERIANISM."

To the Editor of the *Canadian Independent*

SIR,—The correspondent to whom you refer in your late article "Our Presbyterianism, who deprecates the St. Louis Council and American type of Congregationalism, to whom Presbyterian courts are obnoxious, the difference drawn between Congregationalism and Independency unwise, and whose preferences are decided for the British type of Independency, must be surely unconscious of what British Independency is, and is fast becoming. Brownism, as Browne left it, looked to precisely the position assumed by the St. Louis Council. Barronism was a little more churchly. Both held to the expediency and Scriptural character of "synods," whatever that might mean. I suppose Browne and Barron were "British." Perhaps British Independency degenerated from those old times, but if so, it is bravely reclaiming itself. The Rev. J. G. Rogers in his article on "The Congregationalism of the future," distinctly says that "Congregationalism" (I suppose he includes British Congregationalism) "has been to so large an extent a teacher of others, that it may well be content to be-

come a learner in return. Of all systems it has the least sympathy with a Conservatism which resists all attempts at progress, and forgetful of the wants of the living present slavishly abides by the traditions of the past." It need not, then, from a British Independent's view, be ashamed to learn even from that dread Presbyterian body which has certainly succeeded in making itself felt in the past and present destiny of our Dominion. In this connection the same author writes: "Elaborate schemes of organization are not likely to find favor; but there may be a closer intercommunion among the churches without any infringement of their individual liberty, or any approach to Presbyterianism, which has too often acted as a bugbear to prevent the adoption of plans which would have saved our system from the reproaches which it has often incurred, and secured for it a larger measure of success." It was certainly not among American ideas, that the Lancashire Union was formed A.D. 1806, and which dictated the following words in a circular letter of that time: "We have done something for the salvation of our ignorant neighbors, for we have formed and held county associations—we hail it as a most conspicuous omen that many of our ministers throughout the kingdom are finally convinced of the importance of a Union of Independent churches." An examination of the seventeen reasons given as the most prominent among "many other objects" for Union by the Dorset Association, A.D. 1830, will show a very dangerous antedating of the Spirit of the St. Louis Council; nevertheless British Independency as represented by the Dorsetshire brethren did interfere with the absolute rights of individual churches associated, by declaring among other things, that no *lay* representative should be admitted "under twenty five years of age."

Thomas Binney meant something different from the "do as you like" aspect of independency when he uttered one of his many frequent sayings, "we have nothing to gain by multiplying little churches and little men." I do not know but that the withering scorn of that utterance was as powerful as some findings of even Presbyterian Courts, certainly as strong as any American utterance at the St. Louis Council; and I have a lurking suspicion that British Independency spoke in W. Cuthbertson when in his address, as chairman of the union, on "organized independency," he expressed his belief in the necessity of a fuller organization for Christian work along our lines than any to which we have yet attained.

Finally it may calm our brother's fears as to the un-British character of American Congregationalism, and your supposed drifting in that direction, Mr. Editor, to listen to Alexander Hannay's deliverance thereon at the public reception accorded to him by the brethren on 21st ult., in the Memorial Hall, London, for I suppose the Worthy Secretary of the English Union may be taken for a true British Independent. "I did not find the difference to be so wide between American Congregationalism and English Congregationalism as I had expected. I do not find that our brethren in America, in order to give scope to this barbarous-sacred thing they call adelphity, have found it necessary to restrict the autonomy of the churches, or that they are less independent and self-governing than we." And pleading (with applause) for "an aspect of unity more decided," he said to that same assembly, "in this I believe our brethren in America could render us some aid."

So much at the present for the attitude of British Independency toward those opinions the utterance of which in your columns, Sir, has called forth from your correspondent the desire that the Presbyterianizers would "go home."

J. B.