

Dominion Churchman.

THURSDAY, MARCH 2, 1876.

LENT.

Yesterday, as Ash Wednesday, was the first day of Lent, a solemn season the Church has set apart, from an early age, for self-examination and repentance. These duties should be always practised, but inasmuch as those things are very likely to be left undone for which no particular time has been appointed, a special season was set apart, either in the Apostles' times or immediately afterwards, as a preparation for commemorating the great expiation for the sins of the world, and to be employed in fasting or abstinence, in self-examination and repentance for past sin. Irenaeus, who lived but ninety years after the death of St. John, incidentally informs us that it was observed in his time, as it had been in the days of his predecessors. It has been supposed that it originated from the Jewish preparation of forty days before the yearly expiation. In the early Church, its duration varied from one to forty days. It was employed in preparing catechumens for baptism, penitents for absolution, and the whole body of Christians for a worthy participation of the Holy Eucharist at Easter. "During this whole season, they were used to give the most public testimonies of sorrow and repentance, and to show the greatest signs of humiliation that can be imagined: no marriages were allowed, nor anything that might give the least occasion to mirth or cheerfulness; insomuch that they would not celebrate the memories of the Apostles or martyrs, that happened within this time, upon the ordinary week days, but transferred the commemoration of them to the Saturdays or Sundays." Except on those two days, even the Holy Eucharist was not consecrated during the whole time of Lent. The primitive Christians during this season lay in sackcloth and ashes, taking no care of their dress, and using only such food as might be necessary to sustain life.

The word Lent comes from the Saxon word *Lencten*, Spring; perhaps from *lengian*, to lengthen. The name of Ash Wednesday came from the custom, on the first day of Lent, for penitents to present themselves to the bishop in presence of the clergy, who introduced them into the church, and repeated the seven penitential Psalms. Rising from prayers, they threw ashes on them and covered their heads with sackcloth, with other acts of discipline. Our Reformers lamented the disuse of this discipline, and purposed to restore it as soon as practicable, stating distinctly that its restoration was "much to be wished." But in the meantime they directed to be used the Communion Service as found in the Book of Common Prayer. Bucer was so pleased with this service, that at his desire it was directed to be used, not only on the first day of Lent,

but also at other times, as the ordinary shall appoint. Those who take the Bible either as being or as containing their rule of faith, can make no objection to a service which is taken out of the Word of God. For those who do not profess to take the Bible as their guide, it may suffice to state that an attentive examination of the service will show that its object is not to call down imprecations on our neighbors, but to impress our own minds with what we believe will be our own lot, if we continue ungodly and impenitent. The address is unequalled for its earnestness and impressiveness. The prayers at the end are unsurpassable in their impassioned eloquence and evangelical fervor. They are suitable for all seasons, and may be used with advantage by all conditions of men.

PROHIBITION.

The prohibition about which we have a word or two to say just now, has nothing to do with ritual, but with a subject of an altogether different character. It is one which is, however, sometimes taken up just as enthusiastically, although it can hardly be said to have won so much popularity. We refer to a prohibitory liquor law; and the movement in that direction may be said to have received a fresh impetus from the results of the deputation which waited on the Premier of Canada on the 18th inst., or at least, the advocates of such a measure can now perceive exactly the position they hold in relation to the government, and what may be expected from it. We cannot avoid remarking that we were a little taken by surprise when we read the Premier's argument, although upon further consideration, we recognised its harmony with the professed principles of those now in office.

The deputation of the Dominion Prohibitory Liquor Law Council was introduced to Mr. Mackenzie by Senator Vidal, who read the resolutions adopted by the convention held in Montreal in November last, in favor of legislation on this subject. He regretted the absence of Mr. G. W. Ross, M.P., from illness, as that gentleman had bestowed a great deal of attention upon the subject; and he assured the Premier that their object was non-political, they having no desire whatever to embarrass the government.

It is remarkable that the argument employed by the prohibitionists in furtherance of their object is exactly that which the Premier used for a contrary purpose. He said that after much attention bestowed upon the subject, he had been forced to the conclusion that the efforts of that organization had not been followed by the favorable results which might have been expected. He showed that the increase in the consumption of beer and wine during the last two years had been in a higher

ratio than at any previous period. His inference was that the growth of public opinion and the habits of the population had not, on the whole, been in the direction desired by the deputation. The *Montreal Witness* hopes "that Mr. Mackenzie will not apply the same mode of reasoning to other evils, else we may soon hear that the numerous burglaries which have taken place of late are an evidence that the country is not prepared for legislation upon the rights of property, and that the large increase of insanity and disease is an evidence that the people are not prepared for sanitary measures." A member of the deputation remarked afterwards that the increased consumption of liquors was not a true indication of the state of public opinion, as the tendency was for the individual to increase his consumption of drink from mere force of habit, or from improved means. We do not think, however, the increased consumption is to be accounted for in this way. We all know how the prohibitionist is accustomed to urge the necessity of extreme measures on the very ground of the increased consumption of liquor. The Premier's object was to show that if popular feeling had set in in the direction of cultivating drinking habits, it would be of no use to attempt to legislate in opposition to the wishes of the people. He also mentioned the fact that where prohibition has been adopted, other and worse stimulants have taken the place of ardent spirits—such as hydrate of chloral and absinthe. The effect of the Dunkin Act, he said, had not been so satisfactory as had been expected. In one instance that he knew of, where that act had been in operation, the number of places where liquor could be procured had increased tenfold, in consequence of the enforcement of that act. In New Brunswick, a prohibitory liquor law had been passed, but it turned out that at the next election, only one who supported that law was returned to sit in Parliament. He did not think any law looking to prohibition could be brought as a *plebiscite* before the people. A representative government had no power to delegate its functions to others and resume them at pleasure. The question too might arise as to the power of the Dominion Government to interfere with the home manufacture. He was not certain that the power existed; and he could only act as public opinion would sustain him.

Mr. Mackenzie does not appear to have referred to one very powerful argument, which no doubt was in his mind at the time, namely, the large amount of revenue derived from the duties connected with the use of intoxicating stimulants, which no government can give up at once, without resorting to a considerable increase of direct taxation; and no government can afford to do this until the people themselves are willing to submit to the sacri-