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TORONTO, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21, 1887.

FIVE horrible murders have taken place in the county of Welland within the past two years. Only one of the criminals has been caught and punished. Four murders have taken place in Toronto within a comparatively short period of time. None of the murderers has ever been arrested. Dynamite outrages have become matters of almost monthly occurrence. Murderous assaults, especially on whiskey informers, are not uncommon. Amidst this carnival of violence and crime half a dozen judges are going up and down throughout the country trying election petitions! If the law officers of the Crown try as hard to arrest criminals as the politicians do to void elections, they do not succeed as well. Wonderful, is it not? how easily material can be found to void an election and how hard it is to catch the fiends who use dynamite and commit murder. There seems to be something wrong somewhere.

THE fact that close, constant contact with evil is very likely to sap the moral nature and degrade the whole man is often strikingly illustrated by the downfall of detectives. Not long ago the world was startled by the discovery that some of the Scotland Yard detectives were in league with some of the worst criminals of the day. To furnish another illustration it is not necessary to assume the guilt of the Montreal detectives recently charged with most heinous offences. If they are not guilty the detectives who profess to have discovered their guilt are most infamous men. It is not at all wonderful that a detective should end in being a criminal. Constant familiarity with evil in its worst form must soon ruin the moral nature of almost any man. The constant deception practised by detectives must also have a hardening effect. Whether and how far moral reformers are justified in employing detectives who tell falsehoods and practise gross deceit to catch law-breakers is one of the questions that should be discussed at no distant date.

NOT very many years ago—probably at a point within the memory of many of our readers—the Fishery dispute with our neighbours would have been settled with the sword. Now the commissioners of both nations are settling it peacefully, and whatever the terms of settlement may be, no one expects war. That two Christian nations should arrange their difficulties in this way is what one would expect. It would be a lasting disgrace to both if this Fishery business led to the use of arms. Something unexpected, however, has recently happened, which shows that peace principles are becoming potent. France has actually changed her political head without bloodshed. That certainly is something new under the sun. It is quite true that the form of government has not been changed, but for France to change even a president without bloodshed is a great step in advance. The world is improving. It becomes harder every year to see any "glory" in war. Man is learning to do something better than butcher his brother now. Were it not for the grasping ambition and tyranny of two or three European dynasties, three-fourths of the military world over might be disbanded.

THE *Evangelist* has grave doubts as to whether even very young members should have a vote in choosing a pastor:

Why should a boy of ten or twelve, though he be a Christian, be allowed to assume so serious a responsibility as the selection of a pastor for a Christian congregation? Such a youth can hardly be supposed to have one single quali-

cation for the right discharge of a duty over which the wisest Session pauses with solemn hesitation. It is questionable whether such children ought to be permitted to vote even in the election of an elder; we recall an instance in which a company of such youth elevated to the eldership a favourite leader, who had but just reached his majority. But as to the propriety of permitting such youth to elect a pastor, or even to share in such election, there can hardly be a question among considerate minds.

There is much force in the foregoing, but who would care to take the responsibility of fixing the age at which a young Christian should vote for his spiritual adviser? Some young people have more sense at fifteen or sixteen than others have at twenty-one. There is something absurd in the theory that a youth of fifteen, who may be singularly lacking in judgment and experience, should have as much to say in the selection of a pastor as an experienced Christian of threescore; but who can suggest a practical remedy? Perhaps the best way out of the difficulty would be for those advanced in years and experience to give more attention to the training of the youthful voters.

THE *New York Evangelist* thinks that the General Assembly of the American Church should settle the question, Who may vote in choosing a pastor? Our contemporary is of the opinion that no adherent should vote but those who are heads of households, and that there should be an age-limit even for those who are members in full communion:

It is a serious question whether there should not also be some kindred limitation among those who are communicants. Instances are not wanting in which societies of young persons below lawful age, organized in religious companionship of one sort and another—enthusiastic, zealous, over-forward, but quite disqualified to form an intelligent judgment as to the character and qualifications of a pastor—have sometimes of their own motion, and occasionally under inconsiderate or ambitious leadership, taken the whole matter into their own hands, and determined the election of a pastor, greatly to their own real injury as well as that of the Church at large. In one instance of which we are cognizant, the inconsiderate zeal of such a company of youth, many of whom were hardly more than children, resulted in the choice of a pastor against the unanimous judgment of the eldership, and of a large part of the mature members of the Church!

In these days, when societies of various kinds are multiplied within the Church, there is some danger in the direction indicated by our contemporary. The danger arises from using such societies for purposes other than those for which they were established. No missionary society, mission band, mutual improvement association, or similar organizations should, in its united capacity, interfere with the calling of a pastor. The members of these organizations have their rights as individual members of the Church, and with the exercise of their individual rights they should be satisfied. The old "power within a power" is always bad.

CHRISTMAS.

TIME in its calm, steady progress has brought round again the season of festivity, the time for social and family enjoyment. Eagerly anticipated for weeks, longed for by the children, to whom it comes with all but unalloyed delight, those who have seen many happy returns of the season are astonished at the rapidity with which it recurs. All are prepared to welcome the season whose associations appeal to the truest and deepest feelings of humanity. The rich make their palatial dwellings all the brighter when the joyous season approaches; the humblest abode has its inexpensive decorations and little bright touches responsive to the general gladness that has echoed round the world since first the angel choristers sang their benediction hymn. Whether the immediate outlook be radiant with hope or dark with forebodings of coming trials and difficulty, Christmas-tide at any rate has a brightness peculiarly its own.

The advent of this glad season deserves the heartiest welcome. Even where life is most leisurely, in remote country homes, it comes to make a brief disturbance of the monotony that is inseparable from the ordinary routine of daily life on the farm or in the peaceful little village. To hurried toilers in large towns and cities there is blessing in the short pause it gives to the rapid whirl of modern business life. Scarcely a home, however, far removed from the centres of activity, but has its absent ones, whose only chance of joining the family circle is the holiday time. It is a good time for all concerned.

In spite of the familiar proverb that absence makes the heart grow fonder, there are many influences tending to weaken the attachments that bind the scattered

members of families. New scenes, changed associations, fresh attractions, and the steady demands of immediate duty are absorbing time and attention. Many a dutiful son fails to write with due regularity the letter which is so eagerly looked for by mother and sisters, whose disappointment at its non-arrival is deeper than usually finds expression. When all the distant members of the family are reunited in the home circle during the Christmas holidays, these breaks in the chain of regular correspondence, and possibly many other things, are cheerfully forgotten and forgiven. The affections have a chance for free and spontaneous exercise and all are greatly the better for the kindly touches of natural feeling that make the whole world kin.

The several enjoyments of home life will necessarily turn the thoughts to Him in whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named. Christmas, whatever differences of opinion regarding the precise time or manner of its observance, is emphatically a Christian institution. It takes its name from Him whose advent to the world it seeks to commemorate. Its chief associations cluster around the manger of Bethlehem, and the kindest and most charitable feelings of the human heart revert to its memories. The devout soul will feel the force of its appeal. There is in this world of mingled joy and sorrow, this life of surprising changes, abundant occasion for the exercise of the largest-hearted generosity. In many cases that need not be ostentatious or pecuniarily expensive. The richest of heart gifts may have no representative expression in monetary value. By general consent there is a truce to the ordinary contentings, so common in modern life and enterprise, in which other than the best feelings of humanity are in the ascendant. At this season the sacred words "Peace on earth and good will to men," have more meaning than unhappily they have at other times. Let them then have full scope, for none will be the worse, and all will be the better for the actual embodiment of this part of a practical Christianity. May the blessing of Him who laid His hands on the little children and who loves all, rest on every home throughout our fair Dominion, throughout the world, where the inmates meet on Christmas Day, and especially may it rest on the homes that have been darkened by sorrow. May it be a day of widespread joy and gladness!

THE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE AT WASHINGTON.

THE regular meetings of church courts, conferences and unions are denominational necessities. They are of great importance to the Churches whose work they carry on and whose distinctive characteristics they voice. They are not exclusively confined to necessary routine and business detail. All questions of a public character receive more or less discussion and the general sentiments of the particular Churches find embodiment in fitting resolutions. Such meetings however as are held under the auspices of the Evangelical Alliance have their legitimate place and power. There the speakers are untrammelled by considerations of immediate expediency. The Alliance is not a legislative but pre-eminently a deliberative body. It is representative, not of separate denominations, but of the Evangelical Church. Though without authority to carry its conclusions into immediate practical effect, it is much more than a very superior debating club. The best men in the various Churches are sure to take a conspicuous place in the deliberations, and they bring their best and most matured thought to bear on the subjects under consideration. Subject to the somewhat stringent but necessary rules governing the proceedings of the Alliance, the members nevertheless avail themselves of the opportunity afforded to speak with the utmost freedom the thought that is in them.

At the recent meeting of the American branch of the Alliance in Washington, all sections of the Evangelical Church were fully and ably represented. The result of the meeting was such that those who were present were highly delighted, expressing themselves in the warmest terms of the pleasure and profit derived from the proceedings, and were desirous of seeing a similar gathering as soon as such might be suitably convened. At the Washington meeting, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists, Lutherans, Moravians and Friends were represented and wrought together with commendable harmony. This, in itself, is a most hopeful sign.