

## The Canadian Independent

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The subscription to the *INDEPENDENT* is payable in advance. Will not our friends who have not already done so remit us their subscriptions? We thank those who have responded to our request of last week. Who of the *twelve hundred* and more, still due will remit this week?

### WOMAN IN THE CHURCH.

The power of woman and how to use it in the Christian Church, has long been a vexed question and has been answered in widely diverse ways both in theory and practice; while from those who deny to woman any power or influence in the church, it has had no answer whatever. "I suffer not a woman to teach," has been made to do a deal heavier duty than the Apostle intended we suspect, and has been the stolen weapon by which much damage has been done to the work of Christ. We need not stay here to enquire the exact limits of the Apostle's prohibition; that it had limits, was early felt, for, in enacting it afresh, the council of Carthage excepted the teaching of her own sex.

We need not seek in the cloister or in the sisterhood for the true work of woman in the church; in fact the former of these removes her from the church in its true idea, and the latter makes her more of an outside than an internal agency and power. It would be strange indeed if the Gospel of Jesus Christ which is gentleness and love, did not find its most efficient workers in the sex which is naturally the most gentle and loving, and stranger still when it is remembered that that Gospel is the charter of their social liberty, that in all other systems, even in Judaism itself, their condition was one of inferiority, in some, of the direst degradation and most abject slavery. Of course the first and most urgent sphere of duty to woman, be she wife, mother, sister or daughter, is home. That is beyond all question or ail. No Christian tea her would seek to change this, and if any woman in her zeal for outside work neglects home, she sins against duty and God. Charles Dickens draws the picture of a woman of this sort in his "Black House," giving all her time and thoughts to the heathen, full of Borneo-bola Gha, while her own family is growing up in practical heathenism through her neglect. The picture is a caricature, and in some respects so unfair and flagrant as to make the reader angry, and yet it gets its power to annoy from the fact that it has in it an element of truth. Caricature would be pointless if, it had not in it truth—distorted and exaggerated though it be.

But there are few women to whom home need be the beginning and end of their Christian labour; nay, we hold it true, that the more active and thorough a woman is in her home, the more ready she will be to do all in her power outside. Exceptional cases then aside,—those who have large, and it may be sickly families claiming their attention, and those who have to be partially or entirely the bread-winners for their families,—there is a number of women members of all churches who can help in its work. What then can they do? We have no reference here to such work as getting up tea-meetings, making social gatherings very pleasant, and such like matters which the ladies know how to manage so well, but to mere spiritual work. Our Methodist brethren have, in the leadership of classes, a recognised work for women, and the idea of this is good—though we believe the working is not always satisfactory. What can our women do in the Church? Let us see what some of them are doing. We have in connection with our body a mission work, quiet and unostentatious, doing good service for the Master which is chiefly in the hands of ladies, and which has always had among its missionaries some of their own sex. Again there is in connection with some of our churches a Ladies' Home Mission Society, that looks after the bodily and spiritual wants of the poor and suffering. Further, there are in some churches, Ladies' Committees for doing such work in the churches as they can best, and as sometimes they only can do. In others there are arrangements by which older ladies will meet the younger of their own sex for bible study and spiritual conversation at regular periods. In all, women are taking their share in tract distribution and Sunday School work. What more can be done? Well, if all this was being done, done heartily by the women of all churches, we are satisfied that our work would receive a great impetus; man, sleepy man would be shamed into activity if the women did their duty. Still we think that there are openings for work beyond. Why should not women always be the Pastor's Agents to the young and inquiring of her own sex. Men blunder terribly sometimes when they attempt to weave into a pattern the gossamer threads of a girl's thoughts and feelings. A delicate-minded, sympathizing woman can do it much better. Then why should not their voices be heard, not oftener, but regularly in our prayer meetings? We protest that our practice of confining the leading in prayer to men is preposterous. The majority attending our prayer meetings generally are women, should not a woman lead their devotions? We have delightful recollections of prayer meetings where women have led in prayer; we never felt nearer the throne than then, the solemnity and pathos of their pleadings filled us with a sense of the reality of prayer. And, finally, why cannot our churches have an order of Deaconesses? women of God, recognized officially by the church, not necessarily the wives of Deacons, though, no doubt, it would largely be so, who would supplement the work of the Pastor and Deacons, visiting from house to house, ministering as only women

can minister, to the sick and poor, reading the scriptures and praying in houses as need might be. We saw the testimony lately of one who had had the aid of such a body of women in his pastoral work, who said that he would never be without it again, so helpful had he found it. We leave the subject here with this brief glance, commending it to the thoughts of our people, and hoping that it may be the seed of a wider spread utilization of women in the church.

### OBSCENITY IN THE PRESS.

We by no means excuse a wanton oath or would minimize the guilt incurred by its utterance; yet we can understand how, surrounded by profanity, overtaken by a sudden impulse, lips utterly foreign thereto may utter an unconscious oath; but we cannot understand how any one can utter or listen to with complacency, an obscene jest or indulge in filthy conversation, except it be for the gratification of a lustful, filth-loving heart. Yet our public press, is to a large extent, pandering to a depraved taste by constantly detailing cases of infamy over which decency, no less than charity, would cast the veil of silence. We know it is pleaded—let the truth be told and it will prove in the long run an antidote to the evils thus exposed; we have more than grave doubts thereon; we know, in short, the influence is pernicious. We do not vouch for the literal truthfulness of the following story, but we will vouch for its correct illustration of a principle. An employee went to confession. Among other things the confessor enquired whether he, the penitent, had ever used certain means to cheat his master, to which question a most emphatic denial was given. The next time our friend presented himself at the confessional his first acknowledgment was of this very sin. How is this, said the father; did you not deny having done such a thing before? I did, your reverence, was the reply, and told the truth; but you put the thing into my head, and I thought I would just try it. The application is not far to seek.

The French Government, not over sensitive on matters of a religious cast, has recently prosecuted and imprisoned the manager of *Gil Blas*, because of the obscenity found in its columns, the government evidently finding that the circulation of obscene literature was fast precipitating the country into a moral debasement not calmly to be contemplated. "Free thinkers" though, perhaps, the majority of that government may be, the truth is recognized that the violation of the simple rules of modesty, even though it be by words which carry an ambiguous meaning, hurries on to immodest acts and moral blackness. It is questionable if *Gil Blas* contained in its columns more immodest words or thoughts than have appeared lately in our leading newspapers under the head of scandals and seduction it will become, or is becoming a serious question with parents whether it will not be necessary to guard the home against the

pernicious entry of our leading dailies.

We do not hesitate in avowing our belief that to the Christian Church we must look for the righteous salt which shall keep the man from moral putrefaction, but the Christian Church needs to be up and doing. There is a canker in our midst, the leprosy is abroad. A purifying process is needed; it needs no prophetic view to declare that such purification will come either from within or from without. The church must be purified either by its own willingness to maintain the Spirit's work, or by the sure judgments its recreancy invites. We need talent, wealth, influence, if we can obtain them with purity and piety; if not, we must do without them, for our rule imperatively is "first pure." We want no smutty jokes from pulpit or pew, no insinuating suggestions; we want a pure church atmosphere that we may preserve homes pure, and we need to create an atmosphere of purity around, in which all prurient literature will die instead of being, as alas too often now it is, fostered and admired in secret.

### A CONGREGATIONAL "FREE CHURCH."

We had an impression that Congregationalism was a tolerably free Church polity in fact, we have heard it said that its one, or at any rate its chief, fault is that it is too free, that there is not sufficient adhesiveness, binding power, to make it as effective as it otherwise might be. We do not agree with that view, and could give what we consider good and satisfactory reasons for believing that Congregationalism properly understood and honestly worked is as conservative as the Christianity it represents—more than that we should be sorry to see it. But it seems that Congregationalism is not free enough for some people, and so our brethren in England are to be edified by the spectacle of a "Congregational Free Church," whatever that may be.

The circumstances of the case appear to be these. At the time of the last election, the Rev. E. P. Hood, minister of Cavendish Chapel, Manchester, preached three political sermons which seem to have given offence to a number of his people including the body of deacons. It was not, as we understand, that the opinions he set forth were objected to, but that he should use the pulpit for political purposes, as such, a position in which we heartily agree. A minister is a citizen, he has a right to his political opinions, to vote in accordance with them, and to endeavor in suitable ways to spread them, but the pulpit is not a suitable way, that is for another purpose and to another end. It may be said—is said "But in a case like the recent elections in England, where the principles of national righteousness were at stake, was it not right in such circumstances to use the pulpit for the advocacy of those principles?" For the assertion of the principles—Yes. For the identification of those principles with a party—No. We have a conviction that the representatives of those principles in that crisis was the party headed by William Ewart Gladstone, but thousands, in England,