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The Canada Presbyterian.

TORONTO, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21st, 1892.

A NEW YORK correspondent wrote that the editor of the *Observer* speaks quite frequently in the Briggs trial. The editor replies that his oratorical efforts have been limited to answering his name at the roll-call and calling "order" just once. Would that every brother charged with loquacity could defend himself so successfully.

SIR OLIVER MOWAT'S success as a preacher is beginning to attract attention across the line. The *Herald and Presbyter* says:

Sir Oliver Mowat, the Premier of Ontario, recently preached in a Methodist church of the province, and held his audience on a hot summer day for one hour and a-half without any apparent sign of disapproval.

True, but if Sir Oliver had to preach one hundred times a year to the same congregation he might find it necessary to shorten his sermon, even on days that are not hot. There is all the difference imaginable between a Premier preaching one sermon and a plain parson preaching twice every Sabbath for ten or fifteen years.

THE public will soon learn how much real interest the people of Ontario take in the Manitoba school question. Elections will soon be held in North Hastings, a strong Orange constituency, and in the old historic constituency of West York, a constituency under the shadow of the headquarters of the Equal Rights Association. If no candidate appears to represent the No-Remedial-Legislation ticket, we may conclude that there is little vital interest felt in the matter. In England, the best governed country in the world, a principle is always represented by a candidate at the polls. The French politicians of Quebec take good care that they give the Manitoba question due prominence. So far as we know, every candidate before the people of late pledged himself to remedial legislation. If Ontario people do nothing but talk, their influence in settling the question will count for little or nothing.

A VETERAN minister in one of our Western Presbyteries used to make early and elaborate preparations for his communion seasons. Having finished his arrangements on one occasion he gave this account of them to one of his elders: "Mr. A. will be with us and will preach on Thursday, Mr. B. will preach on Friday and Mr. C. on Saturday, all will take part on Sabbath and Mr. A. will preach again on Monday. The men are all good. We will have a great season. *It will be a wonder if the Devil doesn't go into somebody.*" One almost feels tempted to make the same remark about the Presbyterian Church in Canada at the present time. There is a good deal of unrest in more than one of the Scottish Churches. The American Presbyterian Church is being rent with heresy trials. Our Church enjoys peace from ocean to ocean. It will be a wonder if the Devil does not soon go into somebody.

IN France they call a politician who refuses to take a bribe "austere." Austere is good. Your rollicking, hail-fellow-well-met man, who has a weakness for boodle, is a genial, companionable sort of person. He is not austere. He slaps the elector on the back and asks him up to the trough to drink. Too often the elector goes. He asks for the elector's wife and children, and too often the elector is ass enough to believe that the politician really cares about his family. The austere statesman with clean hands is often not nearly as popular as the boodle politician whose hands are reeking with bribes. We might do a worse thing than introduce that word

"austere" into our political vocabulary. Alexander Mackenzie would be one of our best illustrations of past "austere" statesmen. His biography shows that he was very "austere" in the French sense. Our readers can perhaps think of a few who escape the charge of austerity with marvellous success.

THERE is something cool as an Arctic winter in the assumption that if a number of clergymen of different denominations could agree on a basis for organic union the people would unite as soon as the basis was put upon paper. Where is the evidence at the present time that the people want organic union? It is notorious that a large majority of the best men in every denomination—the men who find the money and are doing the work—the men who may be depended on to stand loyally by their church and their pastor—are not saying a word about organic union. It is equally notorious that many of the men who "talk union" are mere rounders, who never work and never pay. They are willing to unite with any church, simply because they do not care much for any. A man without convictions can always be agreeable. It will be quite time enough to define the terms on which Presbyterians will unite with other denominations when a baker's dozen of working, paying, praying Presbyterians have said they want to unite with anybody.

THE *Globe's* commissioners found very little annexation sentiment in Huron and Bruce. One reason, no doubt, is because these fine counties are Presbyterian strongholds, and Presbyterians are always loyal men when they get anything like fair play. We doubt very much if the *Globe* men found one Presbyterian who wants to change his allegiance even for financial reasons. Of course they could easily find any number of Presbyterians who want better trade relations, for a typical Scotch Presbyterian is not afraid to trade with anybody. We think we could easily tell the counties in which a majority of the annexationists will be found, and the kind of people most of them are, ecclesiastically considered. No small number of them are rounders who have no church connection and who tell you unctuously that, "all the churches are good." They have no fixed principles either in politics or religion. It is a pity that the *Globe's* commissioners do not give the religious denomination of the men they interview as well as their nationality and political creed. We doubt very much if they found one Presbyterian annexationist even in Huron and Bruce. Wait until they go into the localities in which there are no Presbyterians and then—Well, then we shall see the difference the Shorter Catechism makes on men.

CITIZENS who are too refined to meddle with municipal matters; citizens who think themselves too spiritually minded to mark a ballot; citizens who are too lazy or too careless to cross the street and vote, would do well to study the following description of municipal affairs in New York, which we clip from the *Christian at Work*—

The great majority of our municipal officers to-day are men whom no pure and refined Christian family would think for a moment of admitting to their circle. They would be wholly out of place in such surroundings. They are the creatures of the bar-room, the brothel and the gambling house, and these places are their natural habitat. Many of them have been the owners and keepers of these dens of iniquity, and are to-day interested in them more or less directly as silent partners, friends and patrons. These are hard sayings, but they are literally true. It would be easy to name a score of men now holding office in this city, including Aldermen, Police Judges and Police Captains, whose histories, antecedents and present associations would verify our statements in every particular. To expect that a city government administered by such men can be pure and honest in the whole or in any part of it, is to do violence to the commonest of common-sense. The Police Department is only a rotten piece of a rotten whole. It is worse than other parts, as it is brought into more intimate association by its official dealings with the vicious and criminal classes.

All that comes from allowing the bad elements of a city to get control of its municipal machinery. The evil might have been prevented, but, in New York at least, it seems incurable. Nominate good municipal men on the 26th inst. and vote for them on the 2nd of January. That is the moral for Canadians.

CHRISTMAS.

THE best gifts we enjoy here upon earth are common. They are God-given, and they are the heritage of all. Man has enclosed the earth, but the sea is free, at least three miles from shore,

and although there was a time when a tax was imposed on the light of heaven it is now free as the air. The rich and poor have an equal proprietary interest in the sun, so it is with all the blessings essential to life and happiness, they are universally diffused. What is thus common can never become commonplace, however numerous and heavy may be the platitudes spoken and written on our common mercies. The Christmas season comes round with unfailing regularity and brings with it the sentiments and emotions befitting the season of joy and hope. The homes that have been undisturbed by separations, whose members old and young have met in the familiar intercourse of daily life all the year round, have but few new forms of expression to convey their affectionate greetings to one another. Most likely they will use the old well-known terms that have done duty for successive generations, but they will be none the less warm and true on that account. Well worn as the customary good wishes are, they find their way to the heart's recesses all the more directly, because the accustomed words come in gentler and more tender tones on the early morning that the association of centuries has stamped as Christ's natal day.

For the reason just indicated we do not pretend to be able to say anything specially new or fresh appropriate to the season that sends a glad wave of joy round the world. None the less fervent will be glad emotions filling human hearts everywhere when the light of the Christmas morning dawns. With what voluble tongues and ringing, merry laughter the little ones will examine with sparkling eyes the varied gifts of affection which have come through the time-honoured intervention of Santa Claus! Thrice glad will be the maternal heart as it throbs more quickly as loved ones, who for twelve months or more have been at their posts of duty far away, assemble once more in their accustomed places around the festive board. When perchance the household encircles the family altar, the well-remembered words of the father's prayer call up tender and sacred recollections as in tones more soft and gentle they rise heavenward. The benediction breathed in the angel song heard first by the shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem, fills countless homes and unnumbered hearts with its tranquil and holy gladness. The tones of that celestial music will ring through the coming ages with a growing depth of meaning. The words, prophetic when first uttered, and in a measure prophetic still, will yet become accomplished history; and glory to God in the highest will be the ascription of the universal human heart, peace on earth will be undisturbed by the tramp and shout of embattled hosts clashing together for mutual slaughter; good will toward men shall displace the contention, the envy and the hatred that embitter human life. The prophecy will be fulfilled not because it is a pleasant dream, but because the Prince of Peace lay on the first Christmas morn in the manger of Bethlehem. He came to do the Father's will and to reveal the Father's love. Of His great redemptive work in its relation to the history of time He shall yet be able to say as He did of the Sacrifice on Calvary "It is finished."

May the blessings spoken by the angel voices on the first Christmas eve be in the homes and fill the hearts of all into whose hands THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN comes as a regular visitant. Once more it wishes them, as it wishes all, A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

A NOTABLE VOLUME OF SERMONS.*

AT the opening meeting of the Pan-Presbyterian Council, the President, Professor W. G. Blaikie, with great appropriateness and much feeling referred to several distinguished men, prominent in the Alliance, who had passed away since the previous meeting. In Great Britain, on the Continent of Europe, and in America, men honoured and beloved had finished their work and entered into rest. When Dr. Blaikie came to the name of John Cairns, his voice became tremulous and it was evident that the feeling with which he spoke was deep and heartfelt. It was equally evident that the large audience was in fullest sympathy with the speaker who paid so graceful and so affectionate a tribute to the memory of one whose praise was in all the churches. In all branches of the Scottish Presbyterian Church, as well as beyond it, Dr. John Cairns

* CHRIST THE MORNING STAR; and other Sermons. By the late John Cairns, D.D., LL.D., Principal of the United Presbyterian College, Edinburgh. Edited by his Brothers. London: Hodder and Stoughton; Toronto: The Willard Tract Depository.