

## THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN

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## The Canada Presbyterian

C. BLACKETT ROBINSON, MANAGER.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 26TH, 1893.

Some men who profess to have great difficulty in believing the Bible, seem to find no difficulty in believing that the Toronto Street Railway Company wish to run Sunday cars mainly, if not exclusively, for the benefit of the labouring classes.

In a letter written at the time, the Rev. John Ryerson states that, when he and the Rev. Mr. Brough waited on Sir George Arthur, and asked for a reprieve for Lount and Matthews, that worthy official stated he had given the matter his "serious and prayerful consideration," and had concluded to send these patriotic men to the gallows. Let no decent man again use the phrase, "prayerful consideration."

The most pretentious fraud of modern times, is the professional friend of the workingman. When he wants the workingman's vote, he always brings forward some scheme about work and wages. If he sees a chance to make money out of the workingman by some form of Sabbath desecration, he is suddenly seized with a desire to give the workingman and his poor wife and children some fresh air on Sunday. When the votes are polled, or the money made, the professional friend takes a rest, and the workingman works on as usual.

Some years ago, we heard a civil service dude, in Ottawa, describe the Hon. Mr. Laird, of Prince Edward's Island, as a "mere Presbyterian elder." Dudedome at Ottawa must be suffering in both flesh and spirit to know that a mere Presbyterian elder will soon be Governor-General. Worse than that, the coming elder's wife is said to be a pronounced temperance woman, who may possibly shut off the supply of free champagne. If that old Parliamentary hand, Gladstone, does not soon die, the British Empire will be turned upside down.

What right has any editor, lawyer, business man, or ward politician to speak for the workingmen of Toronto? When did they commission their numerous would-be representatives to speak for them? Are the wage-earners of this city so hopelessly imbecile, or so deplorably ignorant, that they cannot make their wishes known themselves? Sensible people ought to know that nine out of every ten men in Toronto who profess to speak for the working classes, were never asked to do so, and are not thanked for their pains. With unblushing assurance, they have elected themselves the spokesmen of the workingmen.

A few weeks ago all the infidels, anarchists, Sabbath-desecrators, and general scoundrels in the United States, joined in a general cry to open the Columbian Exposition on Sabbath. They were ably seconded by the secular press, by the railroads, and by everybody in and around Chicago, who hoped to make any money out of the Sunday opening. The whole army professed to be fighting for the labouring man. They wanted the poor wage-earner to see the show, and as he could not go and see it on week-days, they were bound he should have a chance on Sabbath. The gates were opened, but there was just one little difficulty. The workingman didn't want to go. He never asked that the gates

should be opened, and when they were opened by fraud, he did not go in. The respectable workman of Chicago knows his own business.

The order-loving portion of the British Empire will feel relieved when the British House of Commons adjourns. Business has not been conducted by the mother of Parliaments during the last few weeks in a manner that sheds lustre on British history. The fact is, some of the scenes remind one of the good old times when high Canadian statesmen used to threaten to assault George Brown down in the old ramshackle buildings on Front Street. We doubt very much if there are any members in the Canadian House of Commons, who would insult any old man of eighty-four, as some English gentlemen (?) insulted Gladstone, in the lobby of the House of Commons the other day. Let us hope that there are no Canadian M. P.'s who would be guilty of such ruffianism, if they were sober, and very few even if drunk. Except in matters of "boodle," the alleged superiority of the average English M. P. over the Canadian, is largely a myth.

When that brilliant son of Canada, the late Thomas Moss, was a candidate for West Toronto, he settled the workingman cry in a style that stopped it for that contest. The cry was being used against him, and Mr. Moss disposed of it by showing that there were just seventeen men—if we rightly remember—in Toronto who lived without labour, and his opponent was one of them. All the electors, with the exception of these seventeen, had to work with hand or brain. The same point might be made in the present contest. How many of those who patronizingly speak for what they call the labouring classes, can live without labour themselves. There is grim humour in hearing a lawyer, who has to work every hour of the day to earn his salt, or an editor who has hard work to rub along on sixteen hours a day, talking loftily about the wage-earners they want to carry to the fresh air on Sunday. The fact is, that in fairly good times an industrious wage-earner can afford to go to the island, or one of the parks on Saturday afternoon, very much better than many of the people who profess to represent them in this campaign for Sunday cars. An industrious, frugal wage-earner can afford to spend as much on his family as hundreds of shop-keepers can afford to spend on theirs. He can afford to take them to places of recreation very much better than some professional people can afford the same luxury. The fact is, nearly all honest men in Canada are workingmen.

The following paragraph from a recent lecture by Principal MacVicar, explodes one of the current fallacies about creeds, as well as anything we have seen for a long time:—

Every man has a creed of some sort—written or unwritten. The person who has not, is an imbecile or lunatic; because to believe is to act; and the man who believes nothing, and does nothing, is good for nothing. He is simply a burden upon human society, to be tenderly cared for, on account of his helplessness. The Agnostic has his creed. He may reject and bitterly denounce Calvinism, Arminianism, and all other isms; but in rejecting them all he clings tenaciously to his own melancholy ism; he may glory in ignorance and his utter inability to know anything with certitude, and emphasize the poverty of his capacity and resources. The Materialist has his creed. His great point is to get quit of spirit—whether finite or infinite—and to place himself on a level with the beasts that perish. The Deist, the Pantheist, the Buddhist, the Confucian, and the Atheist—all have their creeds. While some of them deny very much, yet they all believe certain dogmas. The human mind refuses to rest in an absolute negation. The Physicist has his creed—more elaborate and complicated than the Westminster Confession of Faith—containing hundreds, if not thousands, of dogmas, laboriously constructed by centuries of observation. And who can tell how many worthless theories had to be endured and discarded before his true dogmatic results were reached?

What the alleged liberal brother objects to, is not so much a creed as a formulated, written creed. He wants his creed left in a loose kind of form, so that, like the western candidate, he can say "them's my sentiments, but if they do not suit, they can easily be changed."

The Herald and Presbyter has this to say about a kind of discussion that we believe has done no little harm to our Home Mission and Augmentation Funds:—

A good deal has been said recently about the undue multiplication of churches in many of our Western towns. The dear brethren who deplore the existence of denominational lines, have done no small harm to the cause of Home Missions, by crying piteously against multiplication of churches, as if money were wasted in fruitless and sinful denominational rivalry. But the facts are, that there has been very slight ground for complaint in this direction. Dr. O. O. Brown, a Congregationalist of wide experience in the West, says, in the Advance, that, having travelled in most States and Territories of the Union, personally visiting a large number of Home Missionary fields, his observation is that "in few instances have churches been multiplied beyond the necessities of the case." Continuing in this strain, he says: "It might be possible to find some places in which abuses exist. It would not be impossible to gather the facts concerning a number of such places, and to state them, and dwell upon them, as to make it appear that the evil is much more prevalent and prominent than it really is. Some who have written, with, perhaps, a good intention, have done this. The resulting disturbance of confidence on the part of donors to our Home Missionary work has been very great; and in some cases injury has been done, which no presentation of the facts can repair, because few of the donors personally visit the fields to see for themselves. Any man should hesitate long before exciting distrust which it will never be possible for him to allay."

The only practical effect the cry about too many churches, ever had in Canada, was to provide a half-decent kind of excuse for people who don't want to give anything for Augmentation and Home Missions. Unite with the Salvation Army if that is the best thing to do, but don't cripple our missions and starve our own ministers in the meantime.

## THE FUTURE OF PRESBYTERIANISM IN AMERICA.

Under this heading the Rev. Prof. Briggs contributes an article to the July number of the North American Review. Much the longer part of the paper is devoted to the history of Presbyterianism in the past in America, and makes interesting reading. Its value as a forecast of the future would probably be greater, were there less evidence in it of a somewhat strong bias in Dr. Briggs' well-known direction, and of strong feeling against those who cannot see just as he does, and who have recorded their votes against his views in the last meeting of the General Assembly. With regard to the future, two subjects are specially referred to, namely, the revision of the standards of the Church, and the questions raised by the now famous inaugural. He traces the blame for the failure of Revision to the intrigues of the conservative portion of the Assembly. But this movement he considers destined to go on and gather momentum until 1894 or 1895, when by the same course of intrigue, by the same parties it will again be frustrated. "Then," he says, "will come a movement which the ecclesiastics will be unable to control—a strong, irresistible demand of a deceived and oft-betrayed ministry and people, for such a revision of the terms of subscription as will make it evident to all the world, that a man of the most scrupulous conscience may adhere to the Westminster symbols as the historic monuments of the Presbyterian Church without risking his manhood under the ecclesiastical domination of an ultra-conservative faction, which may think that it can dominate the faith of the Church, or force from the Church of their fathers, by accidental and worked-up majorities, ministers more truly orthodox than themselves."

But this subject, for the time being, has been overshadowed and lost sight of by those questions raised by his inaugural address and the doctrines it teaches. He gives these as being: (1) The Bible the Church, and the Reason are historically three great fountains of divine authority; (2) There may have been errors in the original autographs of Holy Scripture; (3) Moses did not write the Pentateuch, and Isaiah did not write half the book which bears his name; (4) There is progressive sanctification in the middle state between death and the resurrection. Dr. Briggs justly claims that there is a constitutional method of adding to or taking from the faith of the Church, and because this in his case has not yet been done, he and those who think with him find it still possible to remain within the Church. Until this, or some such action is taken, he does not think disruption probable. "It is probable, rather," he says, "that there will be a series of heresy trials for several years until the ultra-conservatives exhaust themselves and tire the patience of the Church, when there will be a reaction so strong, so sweeping, so irresistible in its demands for breadth of thought, liberty of scholarship, intelligent appropriation of the wealth of modern science and the efficacy of modern methods of work, that the reactionaries will be swept all at once and forever into insignificance. The onset of modern scholarship and of scientific methods of study and of work is as steady and sweeping as the march of a glacier. It grinds to powder everything that obstructs its path. The Presbyterian Church will probably not be seriously hurt by it; but the ultra-conservative party in the Presbyterian Church will be crushed in due time." Unfortunately for this triumph when it comes, if it should come, and so far as it may depend upon the action of General Assemblies, Dr. Briggs speaks of these bodies in language which, if not contemptuous, is at least, such as very greatly to weaken all respect for their decisions. But, of course, the case will be altogether altered when the decisions of an Assembly accord with the opinions of Prof. Briggs.

Taking a larger view of the Church and of its future, the Professor goes on to say: "All American Churches are in the stream of that tendency which is rushing on towards the unity of Christ's Church. The hedges which separate the denominations are traditional theories and practices; but they are no longer realities to thinking and working men and women. The liberals of every denomination of Christians are more in accord with one another than they are with the conservatives in their own denominations. The problem in the near future is this: Can the liberals remain in comfort in their several denominations, and so become the bridges of Church unity; or will they be forced to unite in a comprehensive frame of Church unity outside the existing denominations; or will they rally around the more liberal communions? There seems to be little doubt that the liberals at the present time are quite comfortable as Episcopalians and as Congregationalists, and not altogether uncomfortable as Baptists and as Methodists, and that there is no other denomination in which they are so uncomfortable as in the Presbyterian Church. It is possible that they may, after a year or more of battle for liberty, be compelled to retire from the existing Presbyterian Church, as has been done twice before in this country. But this is not probable at the present time. The liberals will continue to make themselves as comfortable as possible during the brief period of theological war, until a final struggle may determine their destiny. They will go on in theological investigation; they will continue the study of the Higher Criticism of the Holy Scripture; they will seek more light upon the dark problems of the future of the earth and man; they will continue to seek God through the Church and through the Reason as well as through the Bible; they will remain the great constitutional party; they will be patient, brave, painstaking and heroic, until the Presbyterian Church becomes as