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The Canada Presbyterian.

TORONTO, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 7th, 1891.

REFERRING to somebody who is alleged to have fasted forty-five days, the veteran paragon of the *Interior* says:—

The man with a good appetite who would refuse turkey with oyster dressing and cranberry sauce, angel food cake with pineapple, or even poke'd cider with corn pone—that man is no man at all. He is a dolt, idiot, mannikin, block-head, humbug, charlatan. He is a point a mile away from the little end of nothing. He would get lost on the wing of a gnat. He is a bacillus—that's what he is.

If he is all that the sooner he starves to death the better. It would be a great pity to waste good victuals on a creature of that kind. There are too many people in the world who give no value for their meals.

LADY ABERDEEN who won such golden opinions in Canada last summer addressed a meeting of the Edinburgh Woman's Liberal Association a few days ago. There was a sprinkling of gentlemen present, among others Principal Rainy. Here is a practical solution of the question: Should ministers take part in politics. If political meetings held by men are too rough let them attend meetings held by the ladies. The meeting Lady Aberdeen addressed warmly endorsed the action taken by Gladstone in the Parnell matter. They did right. The Grand Old Man never did a grander thing than when he offered to retire from public life rather than associate with the besmirched Irish leader.

THE *London Times* and a number of other journals make violent attacks on General Booth and his scheme for "excavating" Darkest England. Of course any scheme can be criticized and fault can be found with General Booth or any other man. Why do not the *Times* and its imitators on this side of the ocean suggest something better? Will sneering at the proposed remedy cure the disease? The *Times* is a good type of those cynics who think they have done their whole duty when they have thrown a few snarling criticisms at everybody who is trying to do anything for God or humanity. The lapsed classes of London are a standing disgrace as well as danger to the empire, and General Booth is at least entitled to the credit of having proposed a remedy.

IT is said that sixty thousand copies of Prof. Drummond's new booklet, "Pax Vobiscum," were ordered before publication. If we rightly remember the figures, the sale of his "Greatest Thing in the World" went up to two hundred and fifty thousand. Professor Drummond has secured a world-wide popularity with less effort than perhaps any other literary man that ever lived. With the minimum of work he enjoys the maximum of success. Many an able—we shall not say abler—man has toiled for a lifetime without having one reader for every hundred that will read "Pax Vobiscum." To say that Drummond writes what the people want to read and writes it in a style they admire is to state a fact but the fact remains to be explained. However, it is a great thing to have something good that people will read, and no one grudges the genial professor his laurels even if he does get them more easily than most literary toilers.

THE modesty and caution with which Dr. Koch speaks of his discovery deserves all praise. He does not profess to be able to cure all the ills of human flesh as some quack pretenders do. He does not even say that his lymph can cure all cases of consumption. What he does hope to be able to do is to arrest tuberculosis in its primary stages.

Dr. Koch's modesty and reserve contrast most strikingly with the power of face shown by the whole tribe of patent medicine makers and vendors. But all really great men are modest and the greater they are the more pronounced is their modesty. The doctor who can cure every patient, the lawyer who can succeed in every case, the minister or evangelist who can convert all the people in the neighbourhood are all empty boasters. Curing serious diseases, winning difficult law suits and converting hardened sinners are things not easily accomplished. The men who do the most work of the kinds mentioned, or for that matter of any other kind, always speak cautiously.

THE Legislature of Minnesota has passed a law limiting the number of people permitted to witness an execution, forbidding reporters to be present and also forbidding newspapers to publish more than a mere announcement that the death penalty was inflicted. The law was sent to the Supreme Court of the United States and that august tribunal has sustained the Legislature and confirmed the statute. Canada, or at least Ontario, is ripe for a law of this kind. Decent people everywhere are disgusted with detailed reports of executions. The Birchall business was too much for them. Either Sir John Thompson or Mr. Mowat—we know not whose business it is—has a fine chance to win the favour of the best portion of the public by passing this Minnesota statute. Of course there will be the usual howl about the liberty of the press. Who cares except the miserable horde who want to make a little money out of each hanging and the brutalized crowd who like to read about hangings. No decent newspaper needs to dog a criminal from his cell to the gallows and describe his groans and writhings there in order to get readers in this country.

PARNELL may yet illustrate the truth of the American philosopher's proverb, "There is no substitute for wisdom but silence comes nearer it than anything else." The besmirched Irish leader was a cold, reserved silent man. He spoke little and kept even his own followers at a distance. Had he been as ready with pen and tongue as the "old parliamentary hand" people might have discovered what a good many now suspect—that he was not half as wise and shrewd a man as he appeared to be. A wise man would have retired when this storm arose and have taken his chances of coming to the front again when it had blown over. A chairman who refuses to put motions that do not suit him as Parnell did when presiding over his party has tremendous power of face but a cheek of brass is not wisdom. No man with even a moderate share of sagacity would have acted as he did in Kilkenny. When he became excited and spoke as much as politicians usually do during election contests it suddenly transpired that he was not by any means a Solomon. Many a man is considered wise simply because he looks mysterious and keeps his mouth shut. No small number of the people who pose as the very incarnation of wisdom in Church Courts, Parliaments and other places of that kind would seem just like ordinary mortals if they "made a few remarks" on some difficult question.

IN a recent speech Dr. Maclaren, of Manchester made a couple of points that should be pondered over by ministers and all Church workers. He said—we clip from the *Christian World* report:—

There was a tendency for Churches to be so occupied in applying the teaching of Christ to political and social questions as to forget that their first and chief aim should be to become evangelizing forces. Too much importance was attached to the internals of a church. There were those who tried to "run" churches as if they were cotton mills. The same method of measuring their prosperity was adopted. "Whereas," said the Doctor, in clear, ringing tones, "if our Churches lose their spirituality, they have lost everything."

It is quite easy to think so much about applying the Gospel to intemperance, infidelity, popery, labour difficulties and other problems of that kind that we may come to look upon it as a remedy for these maladies and little or nothing more. The Gospel is vastly more than a remedy for a few pressing political or social evils. It is God's force for evangelizing the world. The idea of "running" a church very much as men "run" cotton mills is too prevalent in Canada, and has become a mania in the United States. Statistics are well enough in their way, but a Church that thinks of nothing but statistics may not be more spiritual than an insurance company. Besides, if the spirituality is lost the statistics will soon drop.

ON the first Monday of each year the ratepayers of Ontario are asked to pass judgment upon themselves. Behind the question shall Mr. A or Mr. B or Mr. C be elected to municipal positions lies this other and much more important question: Are the people of Ontario capable of managing their own local affairs? Most of them think they are. Some municipalities do occasionally make serious mistakes in regard to men they elect and in regard to grants of money to manufacturing interests, to railways and various other matters, but it must be admitted even by the most pronounced enemy of popular government that the people of Ontario taken as a whole manage their local affairs fairly well. Isolated cases of failure might be mentioned but there are isolated cases of failure everywhere. The right way to test the matter is to look at it over a large area and over a long period of time. Judged by this test the men of Ontario can govern themselves municipally and do it reasonably well. It may seem almost presumptuous at this time of day to ask if the people of this Province are capable of self-government. The presumption is more seeming than real. How many countries in the world can govern themselves? Not so many when you count them up. The amount of power possessed by most nations is small compared with the amount which the people of Ontario exercise. A goodly number of people, not by any means fools, have grave doubts as to whether Quebec can govern itself. The provincial debt there is something alarming. The usands of people who believed a few weeks ago that Ireland could govern itself do not think so now. Taking them all round Ontario people have a good deal of intelligence, self-control, self-respect and sound judgment, qualities without which no people can be trusted with power.

PROFESSOR SCRINGER contributes a short but strong article to the *Presbyterian Journal* on the revision question. He admits that he feels nothing more than a "languid interest" in the question, and regards it as "of very secondary importance." Among the "obvious evils" that an agitation in favour of revision would produce the learned gentleman gives the following:—

There is the danger that the process of revision will divert the attention and interest and attention of our Church from the real work which it has to do at the present crisis. God has laid upon us serious responsibilities in the evangelization of our own land from ocean to ocean, not to speak of foreign fields; and the work has to be done now. We cannot afford to dissipate our energies on the discussion of theological forms. Such discussion is apt to prove very engrossing, and we might be better employed. Even if the Confession is not ideally perfect, it would be poor strategy to decide on theoretical reconstruction of our position when face to face with enterprises likely to tax our energies to the utmost. Unless some very great advantage is to be gained thereby, it is but risking defeat at a critical hour for the sake of a whim. It may be said this would be only temporary. Perhaps it would, but no one would guarantee that. "The beginning of (this) strife is as when one letteth out water. It is better to leave off the contention before it be meddled with."

The General Assembly has now much more work than it can do, or at all events much more work than it does do. How would it go with the vital business of the Church if a week had to be spent at each meeting listening to set speeches for and against revision. And then the question would be sent down to Presbyteries, and local courts that need all their time for local business would neglect that business and hammer away at revision. The agitation would be a great thing for would-be leaders who like to hear themselves making speeches, but it might be a sad thing for mission work. Professor Scrimger might have added that last year the Home and Foreign Mission boards of the American Presbyterian Churches had each a deficit of \$70,000 or \$80,000. Perhaps the revision agitation had nothing to do with the deficit and perhaps it had a good deal to do with it.

GOOD RESOLUTIONS.

INNUMERABLE are the good resolutions made and broken at this season of the year. The close of the old year and the beginning of the new afford opportunities for recalling the past, and of forecasting the future. Few indeed can look back without feelings of regret that so many things have not been other and better than they have been unalterably determined. People not much given to introspection, at such seasons feel themselves instinctively turning their thoughts inward. They cannot help taking a general survey of their lives, and it is impossible for them to pronounce an unqualified approval of everything with which they