

The Canadian Independent

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All communications for the paper, items of news, correspondence, etc., to be addressed to the Editors, Box 2648, P. O., Toronto.

All subscriptions, current or back, notices of change of address, and other matters connected with the business of the paper, to be addressed to the Business Manager, Box 2648, P. O., Toronto.

All communications should be received not later than Monday. Short items of news may be in time on Tuesday morning.

TORONTO, JULY 14, 1881.

SENSATIONAL PREACHING.

This question has been alluded to controversially, in our correspondence columns; a few words from the editorial pen may be permitted. In controversy we ever need to define terms. In this case we require to know what is meant by "sensational." Certainly that which awakens the senses and arrests the attention so that the step is stayed, and the mind, otherwise careless, made to dwell upon truths most momentous, though out of the beaten path, yet if truthful, is not to be hastily spoken against. "Drollery in the pulpit! Artemus Ward in the pulpit! Surely there is something shocking and repulsive in the idea," writes Paxton Hood; and yet, if thereby men are brought under gospel influence, and the preacher comes naturally by his humour, we would not condemn totally—

"It were to be wished the flaws were fewer

In the earthen vessel holding treasure,
Which lies as safe as in a golden ewer.
But the main thing is—Does it hold
good measure?

Heaven soon sets right all other matter."

The real question is, Are the talents of imagination, wit, truthfully employed and sanctified towards the great end, the establishing of heart and life in truth and righteousness? Is the end God's glory? and the means God's grace? If sensationalism fixes gospel truth, let those use it who honestly can; but as the preacher who goes into the pulpit to say fine things, sins, so he "who turns the pulpit into a booth, on whose boards he gives forth his queer, extravagant, and droll things, for drollery is satire on the lips of the clown; it is truth degraded to the party colours of the harlequin, or the buskin of the fool, grinning to make the multitude grin." So writes Paxton Hood in his "Lamps, Pitchers, and Trumpets," and in this we are at one with him. The pulpit should be characterized by reverence, scrupulous truthfulness, earnestness and simplicity, and with sensationalism that does not do violence to these desiderata we have no serious fault to find. We suppose in this our two correspondents will agree. We add one opinion more. Upon hearers rests much of the responsibility of the pulpit: were there fewer itching ears, less running after every new thing, more longing "for the spiritual milk which is without guile," on the part of the pew, we should have less of false sensationalism in the pulpit. Where there is a demand, there will generally be a supply. Said a minister to the writer some

years ago, in moving to another sphere—"Oh, they (the new charge) want a little gospel, a little entertainment, and short at that: I guess I can suit them;" and though not many may be as outspoken in the matter, the principle holds. Let our churches see to it, for they are largely responsible, if not entirely, for the degrading and false sensationalism which the pulpit sometimes exhibits.

FOREIGN MISSIONS have been engaging the attention of several of the well-wishers to our Zion for some time past, and, as our readers already know through these columns, a Board of Foreign Missions at the instance of the late Union, has been formed. We hail the effort with gladness, assured that genuine Christian work, in which all engage, will afford a bond of unity whose want many of our best men are sadly feeling, and give an *esprit de corps* to our too much severed churches. "If any man will do my will he shall know of the doctrine," and a missionary or missionaries the Congregational Churches in Canada could call their own would prove a strong bond of sympathetic unity. In connection with this movement, and designed to aid and strengthen it, there is an intention on the part of several friends to form a "Woman's Foreign Missionary Association," whereby the sympathies of the women, young and old, in our churches, may be kept in constant exercise by the systematic presentation (say monthly, of news from our mission field, (if we can but succeed in obtaining one,) by regular, though small contributions, and by attention specially directed to the work among the women of the mission field. We have been requested to say to the churches, and especially to the ladies of our churches, that very soon a central board will be formed and constitutions providing for branches—shall we dare hope—in every church be submitted, and may the Lord of the harvest give wisdom, grace, zeal, that we may take our proper place in obeying the command, "Preach the gospel to every creature." Will our pastors take note and our ladies be in prayerful expectation?

[NOTE.—The above was in the printers' hands when the letter of our brother Hall was received.]

WE recommend the following, extracted from a letter to our business manager, to the hundreds who can easily help in a like manner:—

I send with this two dollars, one dollar to help off with the debt on INDEPENDENT, and one dollar for INDEPENDENT, for 1882. I think, my dear sir, that the ministers and officers of the churches are too easy; they do not push this thing as they should do. I think it is a great shame to the Church to allow that \$1000 for the paper, a little exertion would soon clear it.

Excuse my bad writing as I am an old man, well on for eighty.

THE *Sunday School Times* says: "A Church ought to see that its pastor has needed rest time, a fair vacation, at such time of the year as he prefers it." Just so, and a Church ought not to wait until its pastor prefers his request, and formally asks for his vacation. Now is the time to ask him when he proposes taking his holiday, that the Church may make the needful arrangements for filling the pulpit during his absence. One of our

ministerial friends mentioned to the writer at the Union meetings that he had not taken a holiday for some years: he did *not* say that his Church had insisted that he should do so this summer.

PRESIDENT GARFIELD still lives, and we hope that the worst danger is past, although wounds of that character, we are told, are apt to be very uncertain in their final issue, and that it may be long before it can be said that all danger is over; everything is, however, in his favour, the most skilful attendance, with every ministry that the strongest desire for his recovery can furnish. May God still bless the means. It is interesting just now to recall the fact that he was invited to attend the late International Sunday-school Convention in Toronto, and that he sent the following reply:

"EXECUTIVE MANSION,
WASHINGTON, June 13, 1881.

"DEAR SIR, — Your kind letter of the 8th instant, inviting me, on behalf of the Executive Committee, etc., to attend the International Sunday-school Convention to be held at Toronto on the 22nd-24th of this month, is at hand. Please accept my thanks for the invitation, which I regret I am unable to accept, owing to the exactions of my official duties and engagements made for the neighbouring time. It would give me much pleasure to be present with you at Toronto, and in this way testify my earnest sympathy and deep interest in the good work to be done. With my sincere wishes for the abundant success of the individual efforts of the members of the Convention, and with the hope that the meeting may be productive of good and permanent results,

"I am very truly yours,
"J. A. GARFIELD.

"To the Rev. William Harris, Secretary of the International Sunday-school Convention, Princeton, N. J."

WE welcome back to Toronto the Rev. Dr. Stewart, formerly pastor of the Bond-street Baptist Church, and subsequently of Hamilton. His health compelled him to seek a milder climate, and for some time he has been on the Pacific Coast. He returns, not at present to a pastorate, but to be the co-editor (with the Rev. Wm. Muir) of the *Canadian Baptist*. We have pleasant remembrances of the liberality and Catholic spirit of Dr. Stewart during his previous residence in Toronto, and although we differ widely from the views which on one point he holds and will strive to propagate, we do not fear that the manner of his advocacy will lessen our esteem. We congratulate the *Baptist* on this accession to its editorial power.

OUR FOREIGN MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

To the Editor of the *Canadian Independent*.

DEAR SIR, — We should have neither an auxiliary to the London Missionary Society, nor divide our interest with the American Board of Commissioners for foreign missions, but organize and work our own Foreign Missionary Society. We must not deprive our young men of the honour of heralding the gospel to the millions of the heathen world who are perishing for lack of knowledge: this we would do by becoming an auxiliary of the London Missionary Society. The same objection does not apply to the American Board, as they would employ our men, but we would certainly fail to evoke much enthusiasm for foreign missions among our churches; we will not realize our responsibility in the same measure, nor maintain even one additional missionary to the heathen. On the other hand, by assuming the responsibility of conducting our own work, though our

beginning may be small, there is little doubt but as years roll on we will be able to do our share of work in the foreign field. Besides, we will unite our churches in a work second to none in which they are now engaged, and a work which will do them immense good. We will have the subject of foreign missions constantly before our pastors, students, and churches. We have attempted to work through the American Board, and, through no fault of theirs, the plan has failed. Assuredly it will fail if tried again. If any one wishes to strangle our Foreign Missionary Board in its infancy, they could adopt no better way than to advocate either an auxiliary of the L. M. S., or to divide our interest with the American Board of C. F. M. We may work in conjunction with either of these, perhaps send our missionaries in company with theirs, and take up adjacent fields. But if we are to effect any good at present, and lay the foundations of more extended usefulness in the future, we must have an independent organization.

On my return from Toronto I had an interview with that honoured servant of God, the Rev. Dr. Mackay, of Formosa. I asked him what he thought about working through some existing society. He said most emphatically, "Better have *one* missionary under your own Board than *three* through another." I think most of the denominations in the Dominion have independent mission boards, though they might work as easily as we can through others. I observe that the Baptists in Canada have a vigorous foreign missionary society, and raise about \$9,000 for that object. One of their returned missionaries has been doing important service for their College, their churches, and for their foreign missionary society. Our churches in the United States occupy the front rank in the matter of giving for foreign missions, the amount being, I believe, about one dollar for every member. It may be some time before we are educated to that, but if we can only obtain 25 cents per member, we will have \$1,500, which will enable us to send out one missionary, and leave a balance of \$500. Before long, we would be in a position to engage a second. Say that only fifty churches unite in foreign missionary effort, contributing \$20 annually, we have secured the support of our first missionary. I know of more than one church that will give \$100 to foreign missions this present year, provided we have a Board representing the Congregational churches of British North America. Let the first Wednesday in the month be devoted to the subject of missions, the pastor and others supplying information regarding the work at home and abroad, and enlisting the sympathies and prayers of the Lord's people in the great undertaking. Let the giving be purely voluntarily, I have no fear respecting money. Such a society as our "Provisional Board of Directors" has been empowered to organize and work, should involve no expense at home. Those who take any part in its operations will do so as a labour of love at their own expense. I am greatly mistaken in my opinion of the brethren whom I met in Toronto last month if they are not willing to make a greater personal sacrifice in the cause of Christ than this. Let us resolve that we will make this undertaking a success. It only requires a united effort, and humble dependence upon the blessing of Almighty God. A "Woman's Board of Foreign Missions" will be formed as soon as possible in Toronto, with auxiliaries throughout the country. In fact, no labour will be spared by those who have been called to this work to give satisfaction to all who are interested in it. We should be prepared at the next meeting of the Union to send forth our first missionary to the heathen. In the meantime our Treasurer (Mr. B. W. Robertson, Kingston), is ready to receive donations