

churches. The highest legal authority in the Empire has declared that ministers may legally hold their positions in the establishment which only recently omitted the "Commination" from its obligatory liturgy, and deny the endless character of future punishment; while the Scottish establishment which censured a prominent minister in its communion for loose views on the fourth commandment, mitigated the censure by calling him at the first opportunity to the highest honour it had to confer. Upon the whole, our Protestant churches cannot be charged with a very slavish adherence to the letter of their confessions.

At this stage a question may suggest itself. Why have creeds? If no security can be given that a creed can be lived up to, they are but deceits and should be done away with. Two remarks must here be suffered. First, all faith must manifest itself in some concrete form. The first Christian creed may be read in Mark viii., 29. In that simplest of forms we have a dogmatic Confession. The no-creed cry is senseless, and leads to an infallible in every pew, a synod in every religious clique. Plymouthism professes to have no creed, and manifests one continued series of divisions and contentions. Every man has a creed, and so every church, the only question being how far from an acknowledged central truth, such as that formulated in Peter's confession, should the lines be drawn.

Our second remark is: Every creed has a spirit, just as we speak of the spirit of the age we can and do speak of the spirit of a confession; and no church that would be true to its trust can allow that spirit to be travestied or denied. Nor is it an impossible task to discern that spirit. The confessions to which subscription is asked among the representative Protestant churches grew during the great creed making period which followed the Reformation, and in form are controversial; they were designed either to restore or to maintain a truth as against an error or superstition which had perverted or covered over that truth. But those controversies in their old form no longer prevail; the truth remains which alone gives spirit to the letter, which spirit in some instances completely changes the literal rendering of the article. Thus when in the twenty-first of the thirty-nine articles it is said that "General Councils may not be gathered together without the commandment and will of Princes"—the independence of the national church as against the claims of Rome was asserted. The spirit of spiritual freedom therein declared may now demand that the sentence be read without the negative; in which case he is the true churchman who contradicts the letter which so frequently kills, maintaining the spirit, which alone giveth life.

While these occasions for controversy exist, the tendency of a creed is to grow, its articles multiplying as the errors press; as the occasions pass, the opposite tendency obtains, and the simpler confession satisfies; the creed in form may remain as before, but a wider latitude in its interpretation or application prevails by general official consent. A marked example of this is found in Canada in the thorough fusion of three bodies once holding opposite views regarding the relation of Church and State. The United Presbyterian church was strictly voluntary, the Free church as firm in maintaining the right of each congregation to elect its own minister, the Old Kirk sec-

tion in full sympathy with an Establishment. *Tempora mutantur et nos mutamur in illis.* It would be no easy task now to draw anew the old lines, or even to distinguish where they had been. It may thus be readily seen how of necessity a truly progressive church may allow a growing departure from the letter of its creed in the full maintenance of its spirit; and how within its communion without reproach men may honestly remain propounding these changes—always premising that in thus propounding them respect be had to the acknowledged regulations which govern such a course—and they be not justly charged with recreancy to their trust. Indeed there appears to be no other method of exemplifying personal liberty and corporate progressiveness. Ultimately, if the general community declare such departure from traditional belief inconsistent with the retention of fellowship, there is no other course open but separation. The growing sentiment of the day, however, is to avoid all such schism. Mutual forbearance, and a commendable tendency to look upon truth as many-sided, and thus harmonious in its differences, will do much to avoid deplorable divisions.

Our final thought is this:—All the creeds of Protestant Christendom recognize the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the ultimate authority in all things necessary to salvation. It is long since we left the divinity hall. Enforced leisure gave to us lately an opportunity of attending a lecture. That lecture suggested a contrast. In many cases a creed is placed in a student's hand as into a lawyer's hand is given a brief with one-sided evidence:—Here is your creed, here the Bible, prove your creed from the book. The tone of the lecture we heard was pitched in another key. Here is the Scripture, let us examine it for its meaning. Master its historical relations, understand its text, unfold its teaching. Does your confession harmonize therewith? And we venture to assert that as our theological schools follow this course the more of spiritual power they will find in the old creeds which were forged out amidst fire and pain, and the nearer will they approach that oneness of spirit and of aim which will hasten the day when the disciples will be manifestly one, and the world made to know that the Christ has come.

JOHN BURTON.

OLD LETTERS.

The house was silent, and the light
Was fading from the Western glow;
I read, till tears had dimmed my sight,
Some letters written long ago.

The voices that have passed away,
The faces that have turned to mould,
Were round me in the room to-day
And laughed and chatted as of old.

The thoughts that youth was wont to think,
The hopes now dead for ever more,
Came from the lines of faded ink
As sweet and earnest as of yore.

I laid the letters by and dreamed
The dear dead past to life again;
The present and its purpose seemed
A fading vision full of pain.

Then, with a sudden shout of glee,
The children ran into the room,
Their little faces were to me
As sunrise in the cloud of gloom.

The world was full of meaning still,
For love will live though loved ones die;
I turned upon life's darkened hill
And gloried in the morning sky.

FREDERICK GEORGE SCOTT.

Drummondville, P. Q.

PARIS LETTER.

The "Lamourette kiss" is a political proverb that raises a smile when recalled. The worthy prelate after whom the ephemeral good action is named, made in July, 1792, such an angelic appeal to the members of the Assembly to cease their discords, which were destroying the country, that the Montagues and Capulets rushed into one another's arms, embraced, and indulged in a Brother Peachum *mea culpa*. The eternal friendship was sealed at noon; before the afternoon, the reconciled were fiercer enemies than ever. The experiment is proposed to be tried, not upon deputies, for the leopard cannot change its spots, but upon the nation at large. M. Michelin wants a pacific first of May, where the soldiers could fraternize with the people, as the latter do on 14th July, with the army. The Church formerly was blamed for having a plethora of holidays; secular rulers will soon be as culpable. The best way for the labor classes to observe May day, is to work, and have well-earned wages in the pocket. The royalists demand that the 8th of May, Joan of Arc's fete, be kept as a national holiday. In France abstention from work on May day, is not viewed as serious.

The Timbuctoo disaster is likely to become very serious. That France cannot recede from a struggle with the Touaregs, and evacuate the Holy City, is admitted. But what expenditure of blood and money it will cost her, and the ever-present prospect of the fanatics of the Soudan rushing at her. The flying column massacred, including its commander Colonel Bonnier the cause of the rash dash at Timbuctoo, who does not appear to have kept a good camp look-out; the soldiers were surprised in their bivouac—soon converted into a bivouac of the dead. Col. Bonnier himself is the out-growth of the erratic colonial policy of France, that has no clear aim and no co-ordination. Indeed, the colonial administration of France is now on its trial, and opinion might swing round and decide to have no more of it. Dissatisfaction is felt that France is so much behind England in these matters; she has to depend on her practical neighbors for the earliest intelligence about her own possessions—Sierra Leone to wit, and the Anglo-Franco collisions there are displeasing and painful.

As to philanthropic societies in France, the cry is still they come. Their very excess is becoming a drawback, according to many persons. An Hospital-Hospice Sunday is sadly wanted in France, and M. Casimir-Perier, who proposes the removal of all the evils in his country by grand committees of enquiry, would do well to constitute one to take up the subject of private charitable associations; their number is legion and there must be a great waste of good work power and of receipts. One society has just been ushered into existence to deal with the alarming growing evil of children beggars, whose parents or exploiters train the youngsters to solicit alms, and adopt the "profits sharing" system for relief. Every member of the society is bound to give no alms to any beggar child, but to obtain its address and send that per postal card to a district