

case the great correctives to which all well-wishers of our country have specially to look. Let the tone of feeling and sentiment in the community be in a good measure raised, and much of what is complained of will disappear as a mere matter of course. Till this is accomplished, mere repressive measures are like kindling fires in order to melt our winter's snows so as to bring on the spring, instead of seeking that the temperature of the atmosphere be raised so many degrees, when the winter's icy fetters will disappear and the time of the singing of birds will come. We are convinced that a great deal of what is not merely tolerated but applauded in good and often so-called Christian society, helps forward and intensifies the evil complained of far more than what is specially aimed at and condemned. We may be called strait-laced and much else for saying so, but we can't help it. Is much of the fashionable dancing, for instance, countenanced and practised often by members of the Church and by those high in the social scale, compatible with Christian decency and feminine propriety? We unhesitatingly say that it is not, and that no man or woman either could, with any sense of fitness, ask God's blessing upon what takes place as a matter of course at a great many of those popular balls both more or less public and private. The dances that staggered even Byron, who was anything but squeamish, were decent and almost unchallenged in the "best circles." There may be nothing absolutely sinful in them, and the old threadbare saw may be quoted, "Evil be to him that evil thinks," as it often has been, but that all this frequently and naturally leads to evil is just as unquestionable as anything well can be. It may be all very well with some who can stand a good deal of that sort of thing, though whether they don't manage to have a large amount of their womanly delicacy rubbed off in the process we shall not say; but very many others can't, as the sad stories of multitudes of the lost sisterhood of our city streets put too much beyond all question. And no wonder. There may be a certain amount of gilding about the whole of these affairs. They may be very different from the doings in "dance houses" properly so called. But, after all, it is substantially the same thing, or inevitably leads in that direction. If many of our young ladies could only hear the conversation of some of their exquisite, æsthetic, altogether "too-too" partners of an evening, wouldn't they be astonished beyond all possible expression? We should just think they would. A very fast and very fashionable authority on these matters in our own city, who is himself anything but squeamish about them, once said in our hearing, "Do you think I would allow wife or sister of mine to be 'pawed' by these young fashionable demi-reps that are in most requisition on our ball-room floors? Not if I know it. Death sooner." And the man was not wrong in his sentiments, however contradictory his own conduct might be. Yet these are the things that are being done continually, and the seducers of the humbler sisterhood are the favoured cavaliers and the flattered dance-partners of those who would allow no man not a husband to take any such liberties with them as in fashionable ball-rooms are matters of course.

What, again, shall we say of much of our fashionable literature, read with avidity in the "best families," by both men and women? A man, nay, even a woman, making any pretensions to literary tastes is thought quite behind the age if forced to confess ignorance of what is only "too delightfully wicked." What about the nude pictures and statues that are so much the rage even in families professing godliness—if their Christianity were called in question? Bewildered idiocy of course sniffs its best, tries to look patiently contemptuous, and says something ridiculously foolish about the "fitness of things" and the march of "culture." All the same, let Mrs. Jamieson scream her best, and foolish nondescripts lisp out absurd than usual. These are all the indications, not of advancement even in genuine taste or in anything which can properly be called "refinement," but they are proofs of decay in morals and degradation in manners as well. They are at best but the glitter on corrupting flesh or fish which tells of the legitimate end being to be looked for only in places that "good society" regards as unmentionable, and in persons

that may be slurred over as "Anonymas," but are naturally gravitating all the while to the condition of what may be specially the "social evil," but not the worst that could very easily be both indicated and named.

#### THE THEATRE IN CHICAGO.

A CONTROVERSY has been going on for some time past in Chicago over the character and morality of the theatre. Dr. Herrick Johnson opened with a sermon in which he brought a terrible indictment against the vapid imbecility as well as the intolerable profanity and filth of the Chicago places of amusement. He was answered after a fashion by friends of the spectacular in that not over-prudish city. This brought the doctor back with redoubled force, and certainly he appears in his terrible reply—very much as he is described—like an elephant crushing the very existence out of the inhabitants of an ant-hill. He had nothing to do but quote from the theatrical critiques in the daily papers to more than establish all his charges against these places of so-called entertainment. It was confessed on all hands by the friendly critics that the exhibitions were, as a rule, revoltingly indecent; that the so-called plays were in the last degree stupid—duller than ditch-water, and filthier than the contents of a cesspool; that the women appeared almost in a state of nudity, and that the interpolated slang from female lips was even more atrociously revolting than what was set down in the printed words of the plays. In short, the Doctor not only answered, but annihilated his opponents, and held up to the gaze of the decent and the pure all over the States a picture of the drama, as it is at present in Chicago, which might perhaps have been equalled but could not possibly have been surpassed in Pompeii, and would only properly and becomingly be at home in Sodom when Sodom was at its worst.

And are things much better anywhere? What about the sensational trash that passes current too generally in Canada, with a Sarah Bernhardt play now and then thrown in to give some small measure of piquancy to the melodramatic idiocy of ordinary times? Whence come our theatrical stars? What kind of schools of virtue are to be found on our theatrical boards? We wish we could give the whole of Dr. Johnson's letter, for it has a far wider application than merely to Chicago. We can, however, only afford room for the close, and we ask the decent, pure-minded people of Canada to ponder well its weighty statements, for, to a far greater extent than is often suspected, what is true of Chicago is true of the whole continent, and that without leaving Canada out of the count. The moral theatre, as it ought to be, where is it? Where has it ever been? It is thus that Dr. Johnson sums up the whole matter:

"What if it be also true that this dark programme of the theatre is padded here and there with the so-called standard drama, to win the countenance and patronage of the most respectable and decent! I do not need to be told that to some extent it wins them. But neither do you need to be told, moral and Christian men and women of Chicago, thus drawn to see an exceptional play of high and chaste form and tone, that you are quoted and paraded as friends and supporters of the establishment—an establishment three-fourths or nine-tenths of whose influence is pernicious and poisonous. Your patronage goes to swell the receipts of, and to give countenance to the house whose common and most characteristic features are an offence to purity, to religion, and to God. Now and then is heard a cry of reform. But a radical, permanent reformation of the theatre is a phantasm—a dream. The ideal stage is out of the question, *i. e.*, with men and women as they are now constituted. The nature of theatrical performances, the essential demands of the stage, the character of the plays, and the constitution of human nature make it impossible that the theatre should exist save under a law of degeneracy. Its trend is downward; its centuries of history tell just this one story.

"The actual stage of this city is a moral abomination. It is trampling on the Sabbath with defiant scoff. It is defiling our youth. It is making crowds familiar with the play of criminal passions. It is exhibiting women with such approaches to nakedness as can have no other design than to breed lust behind the on-looking eyes. It is furnishing candidates for the brothel. It is getting us used to scenes that rival the voluptuous and licentious ages of the past. Go to Naples, and look on the gathered proofs of Pompeii's profligacy and lust, if you would see whether we are swiftly tending. It is a startling question asked by one of the theatrical play-writers of the times: 'To what extent will a continued progress in the same direction take us in the next twenty-five years?' To what extent, indeed! Good citizens, is it not full time we caught the alarm at these assaults on decency with which now the very streets are placarded? Is it not full time for every respectable man and woman to withhold countenance to the unclean thing, and to enter indignant protest against its gross immoralities?"

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

Mrs. Harvie acknowledges receipt of \$5 from "A Friend" at Aird, through the publisher of this paper, for the Prison Gate Mission.

Mr. J. W. Dill, Bracebridge, acknowledges receipt of \$15, through the publisher of THE PRESBYTERIAN, in aid of the Muskoka sufferers.

Rev. James Sieveright, Prince Albert, N.-W. T., acknowledges with thanks the receipt of \$155, per James Campbell, Esq., for Church Building.

Rev. Dr. Reid has received the sum of \$30 for the sufferers by bush fires in Muskoka, from sundry persons in Ayr, Ont., per Mr. J. P. Ford.

PRESBYTERY OF PETERBOROUGH.—This Presbytery met at Cobourg on the 16th ult. Twelve ministers and six elders were present. It was unanimously agreed that no further steps be taken towards the separation of Norwood and Hastings. It was reported that Mr. Fleming was making satisfactory progress in the study of Greek and Hebrew. From papers laid on the table, it was shewn that the Temperance Hall at Apsley had been secured as a permanent place of worship for the Presbyterian denomination. Upon motion of Mr. Bell, it was resolved that all Session records be produced at next meeting for examination. The Rev. Mr. McKay, of Woodstock, being present, was invited to correspond. A circular was read anent the claims of Manitoba College, and was in the meantime laid on the table. The matter of drawing the attention of the congregations within the bounds to the circular of Dr. Reid regarding the General Assembly Fund, was remitted to Mr. Windell, who has charge of said Fund. The report of the Home Mission Committee was read, and ordered to be engrossed with the minutes of Presbytery. Upon motion of Mr. Bennett, the remit on the Sustentation and Supplemental Schemes was referred to a committee, to consider and to report at next ordinary meeting of Presbytery. An application was made by the members of Oak Hill congregation for reunion with Garden Hill and Knoxville. The Clerk was instructed to take the usual steps in such cases, and to cite all the parties interested to appear at next ordinary meeting of Presbytery. It was agreed to grant to Oak Hill the liberty of supplying their own pulpit until the question of union be finally disposed of. There was laid on the table a call from the congregation of Cobourg, addressed to the Rev. R. P. McKay, of Scarborough, in the Presbytery of Toronto. The call was signed by 205 members and 133 adherents. An accompanying paper guaranteed a stipend of \$1,200 per annum in monthly instalments. There is also a manse. The call was sustained as a regular Gospel call, and ordered to be transmitted to the Presbytery of Toronto. Commissioners were appointed to represent the Presbytery and congregation in prosecution of the call. The next meeting of the Presbytery was appointed to be held in St. Paul's Church, Peterborough, on Tuesday, 21st March, at two o'clock in the afternoon. A letter was read from Mr. Wendell, tendering the resignation of his charge. Commissioners were appointed to visit the congregations, and to cite them to appear for their interests at the meeting in Peterborough. Mr. Cleland reported regarding the state of the Synod and Presbytery Fund. The difficulty between Bethesda and Alnwick, in the matter of the proportion of salary to be paid by each congregation, was remitted to a new committee. The congregation at Campbellford obtained leave to sell a portion of Church property, as applied for.—WILLIAM BENNETT, *Pres. Clerk.*

ANNIVERSARY services were held in Mount Zion Church, Ridgeway, on the 22nd ult. Rev. R. N. Grant, of Ingersoll, preached morning and evening. On the following Monday evening the annual meeting was held, at which addresses were given by Rev. Messrs. Grant and Murray, of London, and Fraser, of St. Thomas. The annual report read by the pastor, Rev. G. G. McRobbie, indicated marked prosperity. The whole amount raised by the congregation from all sources and for all purposes was \$7,440.55. The large expenditure of \$21,000 incurred in building the church has been very nearly met, it being expected that less than \$3,000 will remain unpaid next May.