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TORONTO, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 15th, 1888.

THE vitality of some questions is marvellous. Some of the best papers in the United States are vigorously discussing how far a spiritual court should concern itself with matters not distinctly spiritual. The question is an old one, but every variety of opinion prevails and the disputants contend as vigorously as if nothing had ever been said on the topic before.

It is not in the realm of theology alone that questions live long. The great political battle now going on in the United States is nominally for the Presidential chair. Actually it is a fiscal fight between Protection and an amended tariff looking a little—precious little—toward Free Trade. If all appearances are not deceptive, fiscal questions will be the main issue at the next Dominion election in Canada. The questions are not by any means new, but they are as far from being settled as they ever were. It might simplify matters a little to acknowledge that there are some problems in politics and theology which can never be solved, or at least are not likely to be in our day.

If the presence of much smoke always proves the existence of some fire there must be something wrong with the questions that are set for teachers and candidates for entrance to our High Schools. These examinations are invariably followed by an outburst of indignant criticisms in the press. It can scarcely be possible that so much would be written were there nothing to write about. Hundreds of students are examined every year in Toronto University, in Queen's, in Trinity, in Osgoode Hall and elsewhere, and though candidates fail everywhere there is usually very little complaint about the examination papers. Primary, first intermediate, second intermediate, and final examinations are conducted at Osgoode Hall every three months and a word of complaint is rarely heard about the result of these examinations. The examinations at all the Universities usually pass off with very little criticism. Why should there be such a noise about examinations conducted by the officials of the Department of Education? If, as is so often alleged, some of these officials prepare papers to show their own cleverness rather than fairly to test the knowledge of those examined the sooner such work comes to an end the better.

A MEMBER of the New York Presbytery thus describes the performance of a sad duty—a duty which we think has never been discharged by any Canadian Presbytery, certainly not by any Western Presbytery:

We have just returned from disbanding an old and once prosperous Church. The pastor resigned and was dismissed; the committee was named for the giving of any remaining letters of dismission of members; the book was put in the hands of the Clerk of Presbytery for preservation; then the roll was lessened by the erasure of a long familiar title, and the deed was done. Everybody felt a sense of depression; it was a melancholy meeting. And one of the more thoughtful ministers remarked, as we went finally forth from the building: "Well, it seems that 'Jerusalem, my happy home,' is the only place 'where congregations ne'er break up.'"

We cannot recall a case in Canada in which a Presbyterian Church, once prosperous, was disbanded. Congregations have been united, and there are many more that would be better united if they only thought so. Nothing but an extraordinary flight of population or the most outrageous bungling on the part of a Presbytery could lead to the extinction of a congregation. It is, of course, conceivable that a congregation

might decline in vital Godliness until it became extinct. An unconverted pastor with unconverted office-bearers would kill any congregation in time. Such a consummation, however, would hardly be possible unless a majority of the Presbytery were as dead spiritually as the expiring congregation.

THE Chicago Times has been publishing some startling facts in regard to the condition of factory girls in that city. Assuming the facts to be as stated, the word horrible is none too strong to describe the treatment of many of these girls. And yet, as the Interior shows, there is another side to the shameful story:

But it must be remembered that this girl-slavery is voluntary. There is an increasing demand for domestic help, at wages double what these factory girls average, and this demand remains but poorly supplied. It is very difficult to get a satisfactory domestic servant at any wages. These slave girls can have clean and comfortable homes, moderate work, excellent boarding, kindly treatment, fresh air—all the comforts of life if they will accept it. If they choose rather to crowd each other down to starvation wages and foul quarters, they have themselves to blame for it, unless in exceptional instances. If half these girls would go out to domestic service they would largely improve the condition of those who remain, in wages, hours and treatment.

These remarks apply with equal force to nearly every city and town in this Dominion. If girls will work in factories as slaves when they might have comfortable homes, good board, good wages and good treatment as domestic servants, they must take the consequences. There is no law that we know of that can shield a factory girl from the results of her own folly. It is much harder to get a good domestic servant in almost any part of Canada than to get a doctor, or lawyer, or preacher. The demand for the work of domestic servants is the one kind of demand that knows no decline in this country.

DR. DANIEL CLARK, the able and accomplished superintendent of the Toronto Lunatic Asylum, writes the following in reply to some press comments on the escape of a patient which took place the other day:

I see a city item in which blame is charged against the asylum authorities, because "within a week two lunatics have made good their escape." This is not correct, as only one made good her escape, and as she has only been gone sixty hours she may be soon heard of or return, as many do. It is forgotten that an asylum is not a prison with iron doors, bars, and heavy locks. The patients are allowed a good deal of liberty seeing they are not criminals, and have no personal restraint put upon them. One hundred and forty-one patients in this asylum are never under lock and key in the daytime, yet not over two or three annually elope out of over 860 under treatment. An asylum from which no patient can escape is a veritable gaol, and not a home and hospital, as an asylum should be. All the particulars of the recent elopement were reported to me by the medical officer in charge on Monday last on my return and, in justice to them, this correction is due.

Dr. Clark is distinctly right. Better that a patient should escape occasionally than that 860 unfortunates should be kept under lock and key. An asylum is not a prison. The inmates of an asylum are not criminals. It will gratify every humane man in Ontario to know that Dr. Clark manages the overcrowded institution, of which he has charge, in such a way as to allow many of the inmates a good deal of liberty. If restraint is the only thing wanted it would be easy, though unspeakably brutal, to put the 860 patients in irons. The friends of the insane and idiotic part of our population are no doubt thankful that our asylums are under the care of humane Christian gentlemen, who look upon an asylum as a home and hospital—not a prison.

WORK AND PRAY.

THIS age, more than many that have preceded it, is an age of activity. Work is its distinguishing characteristic. There is little room for the idler and less tolerance for the dreamer. It does not, therefore, follow that in this bustling nineteenth century a contemplative life is valueless, but for the present at least, unless contemplation can speedily be transmuted into practical utility, there is but little chance of its recognition. The poet may dream his beautiful dreams, but what do they amount to if they are not published for the delectation of the reader, who believes that poetry is the next best kind of composition to prose? In these days life is real, life is earnest, even although there are some who profess to believe that the grave is its goal. Those who believe only in this solid earth, bend every energy to make it yield all it can for their possession, and if possible, for their enjoyment. Even

many who claim to be Christians are equally busy in seeking to lay up treasures on earth, and at the same time are striving not to be unmindful of the injunction to lay up treasures in heaven. There are obvious efforts to reconcile the irreconcilable. There are many acting on the belief that it is possible to serve God and Mammon. Many are endeavouring to make the best of both worlds, by trying to make sure of the present at all hazards.

The same restless activity has found its way into the Churches. In these there is much emulation, whether of a healthy or unhealthy sort time will determine. Is the animating spirit of every congregation the earnest desire to do all the good they can in the Master's name and for His sake? Is there a conspicuous desire in the Churches to save souls, to edify the body of Christ, by strengthening the tempted, encouraging the despondent, lifting the fallen and promoting the spirit of Christian brotherhood? Is there or is there not an eager desire on the part of some Churches, to vie with each other in the erection of splendid edifices, to take pride in the appearance they are able to make, and to lay themselves open to the reproach that they are ceasing to be places where men and women meet to worship God, and be strengthened by the service to lead holy, humble, and Christ-like lives in the world? It may be the sneer of foes, not the honest criticism of friends of religion, that describes the fashionable Church as a religious club for well-to-do people. It is for all sincere friends of the Churches to ask themselves if there is any possible ground for such a reproach. If our Churches should become such exclusive institutions, it is certain that pure and undefiled religion, and practical piety in them can have only a sickly existence.

There is no fault to be found with active Christian effort. There is not by any means too much of it. What has to be restrained is an aimless, sentimental fussiness that exhausts the worker, leaving him or her with only the satisfied consciousness, of duty done, but from which there is no other perceptible effect. Again, there are many idlers in many congregations who might easily be drafted into the ranks of Christian workers if a little tact and foresight were exercised, and not so much left to mere whim and impulse. Great advances have been made in perfecting organizations which have been multiplied to such an extent that some are inclined to think that this phase of Christian activity is in danger of crushing out individuality of effort, and making what should be hearty and spontaneous, merely mechanical and perfunctory routine. Systematic and combined effort is indispensable, and, when properly inspired and guided, most effective and productive of good results. It has, however, its weak points.

The large amount of outward activity in Christian work is telling on the spirituality of the Churches. There have been notable advances in external prosperity. Contributions are more liberal, and there is a quickened sense of responsibility—all healthful and hopeful indications. Is there a corresponding advance in the spiritual life of the Churches? Do the incessant claims of outward duty leave sufficient time and opportunity for quiet, meditative, devotional reading of the Scriptures, and such works as help to strengthen devout and reverential feeling? Is prayer now mainly offered amid the degree of publicity which the family circle and the prayer meeting afford, and the door of the closet left indefinitely shut? Nay, the question may not be inopportune whether the time-honoured and blessed practice of family worship is maintained in Christian homes with anything like the regularity of former years? If these valuable means for individual growth in grace are neglected, the sacrifice is great, and the consequences will follow with the certainty that effect follows cause. A strong and healthy spiritual life will be wanting if the means for its attainment are neglected. Christian effort, it is true, knows no limit to its exercise. It is to extend in every direction, but religion, like the most beautiful of its graces, must begin at home.

Personal and domestic piety is a source of strength to the Church. Without it bustling activity in other fields will not amount to much. The cultivation of personal religion and its genuine, joyous and healthful exercise in the household are of too much importance to be lightly regarded. If the individual life of all professing Christians gave evidence of daily communion with divine things, if all professedly Christian homes had a fixed place for the family altar, and were the sweet reasonableness of pure and undenied