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## CONTENTS :

THE TIMES.	DOMESTIC ECONOMY.
TORONTO AND ABOUT.	POETRY.
TRADE, FINANCE, STATISTICS.	THINGS IN GENERAL.
FACTS FOR VOLUNTEERS.	CORRESPONDENCE.
THE "CHURCH" IN THE "WORLD."	MUSICAL.
MODERN FEMALE COSTUME.	CHESS.
HOW WE WENT TO THE COUNTRY.	&c.   &c.   &c.

## THE TIMES.

Once again we have been admitted to the stage and the green room, and other places technically called "behind the scenes," and by it we have further information as to the progress of our pretty little political comedy at Quebec. It is really wonderful what ingenuity is needed to find money to pay for sham royalty and gratitude to friends! The whole thing is a business, dexterously carried on. Messrs. Prentice and Chapleau have let us see how things are done. And that is all we poor taxpayers will gain by the revelations just made. Not one of the gentlemen involved will suffer anything—not one of them can suffer anything. They will hold precisely the same position in public estimation as they have held during some years past. Mr. Chapleau's able and unselfish diplomacy, Mr. Prentice's success as a financier in a quasi-public way, and Mr. Senecal's generous devotion to the province are now clearly established facts.

But Mr. Chapleau has made a mistake in appearing to shirk investigation. We are all quite sure that if the Banque du Peuple lent the money at six per cent. and the government paid only five per cent. Mr. Prentice and Mr. Senecal furnishing the extra one per cent. there must have been collusion and promises to recoup which were anything but honest. Mr. Chapleau can doubtless answer every question to the entire satisfaction of everybody, and it is well worth the time of the Public Accounts committee, or any other committee, to do so needful a piece of public service.

But this may as well be said that Mr. Wurtele is not likely to be drawn into the squabble. Whatever may have been the implied or real arrangements between Messrs. Chapleau and Prentice, the French loan was evidently a straightforward negotiation.

The pronouncement of the Presbyterian Synod on the relation of the church to those who have, or may be supposed to have broken the law, as in the divorce case before it, was not a little strange. Here is the story told in brief by the *Globe* :—

"A man and woman were married in this Province in 1870, and continued to reside in the same locality for two years subsequent to their marriage. The husband then went to reside temporarily in the State of New York, where according to the evidence taken, he was guilty of adultery, and this crime, on his return to Canada, led to a separation between him and his wife. After living for some years at her father's house, sustaining herself meanwhile by teaching, she went to the United States, with her husband's concurrence, for the purpose of obtaining there a divorce from him. In order to do so, it was necessary that she should be domiciled there a certain time, and after the lapse of the requisite interval she obtained a divorce on the grounds that her husband was addicted to drunkenness and that she had been deserted by him, the charge of adultery not being pressed. She then returned to Canada, apparently in the full belief that the divorce so secured was valid in this country, and was, over a year ago, married a second time by the pastor of a Presbyterian congregation of which she was then and had for some time been a member. Subsequently a question was raised as to the validity of the divorce and second marriage, and in this way the matter came up before the Assembly, which decided that neither was valid, that the law of Canada had been broken in the second

marriage, and that the woman should be suspended from Church membership until she procured a divorce from her first husband which would be legal in Canada."

Now, in discussing this matter the Synod constituted itself first of all a legal court, undertaking to decide a case of law, and then to determine the relation between the law and gospel. How far it was competent to carry out the first part of the programme is a fair question for debate, and the finding was perhaps not so distinctly correct as some people seem to imagine. I know that it has been decided, again and again, that a divorce procured anywhere in the United States is not valid in Canada; but the question is not settled for all that. While we acknowledge the binding character of marriages made in the United States we shall have to recognize the validity of divorces.

But the Synod was not a legal court—it was a body of men representing a church—a church of Christ, the Christ who came "not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." This woman confessedly has done no moral wrong—she tried to comply with the law, and thought she had succeeded; she did her best to screen her first and worthless husband by not bringing against him his greatest sin; she went into the States and obtained a divorce by fair and legal means; she became a free woman that is, according to the law of the country in which she was then living, and according to the law of the Gospel, and then fairly and legally married again; she returned to Canada, not knowing probably that while she might live with the second husband in truth and in law a good and virtuous woman, if she came to Canada she would be a vile creature, too bad even for the church to try and save—and she went back to her old place in the church, and desired to sit again at the Lord's—I beg pardon—at the church's table of communion. But this the Synod has denied. Christ gave Judas the sop; but the times have changed.

Two things are needed by way of change: first of all, a Divorce Court in Canada; for now only the very wealthy can afford to have a private Act of Parliament passed on their behalf; and, secondly, the Church should learn that its work is not to enforce the statutes of the realm, but to save sinners. This spirit, as displayed by the Synod, would not protect a slave in Africa, or a Christian in Turkey; would deny the grace of God to law-breakers, and limit the working of salvation to the range of the Canadian Statutes. Christ declared the grace of God for all, but the Synod put it at the disposal of our legislators.

I wonder it never occurred to any of the ministers and delegates to ask the clergyman who performed the marriage ceremony, why he did it? He knew all the circumstances of the case and surely should have advised her against a step which would necessitate an inquiry as to whether she could be continued as a member of the church. It seems to me the Synod was hard upon the woman, and strangely lenient to her pastor.

Another difficult question came up for discussion before the Synod, as to whether priests leaving the Church of Rome for the Presbyterian Church shall be reordained. I have nothing to say about it, and only mention the matter to call attention to some quaint changes which take place with the flow of time. Rome! ancient, orthodox, mighty Rome, having her very ordination called in question! To ask a priest to accept that is certainly asking him to unlearn a very great deal.

On Tuesday next, those who care for it, may see a very peculiar demonstration in Montreal. The male members of the French Church