

## The Canadian Independent

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TORONTO, DEC. 1, 1881.

## OUR MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

As missionary meeting in the interest of our C. C. M. S. are beginning to be announced, a few words upon the work may be found in season. Attention should be drawn to the fact our correspondent "Mnason" exhibits in the CANADIAN INDEPENDENT of August 4th, last past, that our regular contributions to the mission work at home have steadily decreased since 1875. The decrease is shown to be fully one-third of the entire amount, or about 35 per cent. Let this be noted. Again, as a consequence in part of that decrease, there are places where our churches should continue that have been, or threaten to be, wholly abandoned. Whitby is in that position to-day. Either the Society must have more resources and sympathy, or that Church, with its virtually unencumbered property, must be numbered among the things that were. And the same may be said the entire country through. Where is Brockville, Owen Sound, &c.?

Manitoba calls; if our Churches in the older Provinces die, what assurance can friends in the great North-West have that, even if planted there, we shall not suffer extinction at last and ere the work is done? Whence, too, are to come the sinews of war if the base of supply fails? There are also places where, in Ontario, we ought to plant our feet firmly, yet who can say to an aspirant to ministerial usefulness—enter in and starve. We are too fast losing our eligible men, other fields than ours offer inducements, not merely monetary, but of prospective usefulness apparently denied to them here. These facts should be not only known but pressed, and the resolve invited that this state of things must not continue, otherwise our mission work is at a farce, and the sooner it comes to an end the better.

What remedy? Let the trumpet sound to battle, the cry go forth "To your tents, O Israel." "We must be free or die;" free from this incubus of poverty, inaction, free to enter in to new fields, to sustain and re-fructify those wearing out. We must be conscious of a mission, definite and high, and strong in faith, go forward. Let there be earnest giving, not contributions doled out "as one can spare and appear respectable." Kindle afresh the missionary spirit by assuring ourselves that we have a mission; then with intelligence and liberality to the work. May our deputations be met with such receptions that they

may return home baptized with fresh zeal, and the churches be blessed with such a revival as God only can command and bestow. To such a consummation let our attitude be expectant. "According to your faith be it unto you."

## SENSATIONAL PREACHING.

Dr. John De Witt, of the Dutch Reformed Church, one of the American Revision Committee, and an earnest, practical man, read a short time since, before a ministerial association in Philadelphia, a paper on the subject which forms the heading of this *resume*. He introduced his subject by the following anecdote: A distinguished and living preacher, warming with his theme, found one Sunday his audience greatly moved. Men and women audibly wept. The full congregation bent forward as one man towards him who seemed to control them at will. The preacher felt the strain, but ere the feeling had reached its height he stopped, and in a tone of calmness suddenly assumed said, "Excitement like this does not become the house of God." He paused, and waited until his audience had regained self-possession ere he finished his subject. Here is presented a strange sight; an orator wielding oratorical power, refusing to use that power as soon as it became plain that he was really wielding it. How many would have had the moral courage our friend possessed and exercised,—an exercise we must respect even should we doubt the wisdom thereof, or think the principle overstrained. Let us comprehend the scene. No pleasure is more enticing than the exercise of power over our fellow men, and of all power that of an orator swaying hundreds at his word seems the least open to objection on the ground of tyranny or self. Yet here is a minister, whose work specially seems to depend upon oratorical power, wielding that power, and just at the moment he finds responsive thereunto those whom he is seeking to influence, he stops and dares not go further, virtually saying, "this is not the place for exhibitions." Was he right in his judgment? Dr. De Witt evidently thinks he was. We join him in his estimate, and proceed to epitomize the reasons given for standing firmly by such a judgment.

Our Western Association at its last meeting appears to have discussed "the pulpit and what it should utter," and "severely denounced the conduct of ministers who used their pulpits to utter their doubts, to air their speculation, and to play the mountebank by the display of learned bosh." We agree with the Association thoroughly, but mention its utterance here simply for the purpose of distinguishing between what is there denounced, and "Sensational preaching," which has some defence; the others have none. The pulpit is not the place for doubt, nor speculation. Imagine if you can Paul prefacing his Epistles with a "perhaps," or Peter beginning "There may be some doubts as to the positive character of sin; on the whole, however, argument preponderates on the positive side, therefore it is prudent to repent." The preacher is not the apostle of doubt or speculative theology, but of righteousness, God and truth. As for "mountebankism and learned bosh," the blasphemies of Ingersoll

are less demoralizing, inasmuch as the latter are open, frank; the other simply use the temple of God to give an air of respectability to that which in its own proper character would utterly fail, being "neither flesh, fowl, nor good red herring." Such profanities should not call for calm discussion; the Christian instinct, unless perverted, repels at once, and persistently. Our subject is what may be properly called "Sensational preaching," the others, though pulpit guarded, are not preachings.

Dr. De Witt begins with the statement that the preacher as an orator is to be distinguished from the essayist, the poet and the dramatist, though each in his own way is engaged in the exhibition of truth by means of language. The essay and the poem are akin, their province is to unfold truth, the one to the understanding, the other to the imagination, the essay being the philosophic, the poem the imaginative development of truth; neither contemplate an audience, they write in solitude. On the other hand, the drama and the oration contemplate their respective audience, and the effect desired upon each; and this at once brings us to the principle underlying the question of Sensational preaching.

The drama, by representation, excites the feelings for the purpose of promoting enjoyment; the oration by the development of truth moves the will for the purpose of securing action. Thus the purpose of the dramatist in, e.g., dramatising the life of Demosthenes, is by representation to call forth from the audience feelings similar to those called forth from the Athenian people, but with this difference. Demosthenes, in effecting his purpose, roused the Athenian will, "Let us march against Philip," they cried. Suppose one of the audience in the drama, carried away by the power of the actor, should forget himself and cry as the Athenians cried, "Let us march against Philip," the entire current of feeling would change and the audience from being thrilled with emotion would be convulsed with laughter; or supposing the entire audience thus moved, and no Philip to march against, the revulsion of feeling would be so great that again the entire performance would be an exaggerated burlesque or a remembrance of disgust and aversion. Now the character of sensational preaching is that it addresses itself to precisely the same faculties as the drama, and practically tends to exclude the more active principles of the life, hence its popularity, it is in short a Sunday drama, without the steady work of self-sacrifice following; hence too its evil, it makes the pulpit a stage, the preacher an actor, and the congregation simply an audience, which is not the function of a New Testament Church and order. True, such pulpits draw, so do theatres, and draw in proportion to the blood and fire and deluge provided for the harrowing of the feelings and the quiescence of the will. Anything that will stir the good sentiments, thus satisfying in some measure the conscience, and leave the will unmoved, (the vast majority of men justify the definition that man is a lazy animal,) is welcomed and appropriated, but at the price of moral torpor and spiritual death. Our author therefore is fully justified in concluding that "if a minister

finds, however popular he may be, that he has adopted a mode of preaching which while it enkindles the sensibilities of the people leaves them still untouched at the will, he ought to do what the preacher already referred to did—to stop. And he ought to pray for deliverance from that mode of preaching as he would pray for deliverance from the toils of the devil."

Is there then no place in the pulpit for addressing the feelings? Must the sermon be cold, simply expository? There are feelings and feelings. There are those which are instinctive and involuntary; there are those that are called voluntary emotions. The pulpit is to address the latter. "Thou shalt love the Lord—thou shalt love thy neighbour." To these active and voluntary feelings the preacher should address himself, to the sense of right and truth, the emotions of active benevolence and piety. Those sentiments are to be quickened, these sensations aroused, only be it remembered such emotions are emotions of character, not mere feelings of nature.

The subject is worthy of further development. It is further developed in the address referred to, but the editorial pen has reached its limit and we close by a quotation:—

"Sweet are the tears that from a Howard's eye  
Drop on the cheek of one he lifts from earth;  
And he who works me good with unmoved face  
Does it but half; he chills me while he aids.  
But even this, this cold benevolence  
Seems worth, seems manhood, when there rise before me  
The sluggard pity's vision-weaving tribe,  
Who sigh for wretchedness, yet shun the wretched,  
Nursing in some delicious solitude,  
Their dainty loves and slothful sympathies."

"And it is because the great tendency of sensational preaching is to this 'selfish,' 'dainty,' 'delicious' and 'slothful' excitement of the sensibilities that it ought to be regarded as one of the worst evils that can possibly befall the church."

WE regret to learn that on Sunday evening, 20th November, the Rev. Joseph Griffith, of Hamilton, announced to his church that he had accepted a call tendered to him from the church at Sandy Creek, Oswego County, N. Y., and that he would leave at the New Year. We bid our brother farewell with regret,—regret however, that will not prevent our following him with our esteem and prayers for his future usefulness and comfort; may the Church at Hamilton also find the continued guidance of Him who is head over all things to His Church. We trust that it will not be long ere the vacancy thus caused will be filled, and that both Mr. Griffith and the Church he is so soon to leave will have opened up to them a future of increasing prosperity and blessing.

WE cannot allow this reminder to pass without noting the rather startling fact that during the ecclesiastical year reported in our last year book, there have been sixteen pastoral resignations in our denomination in Canada (seventeen if we include Dr. Wilkes' resignation of the honorary pastorate of Zion, Montreal), our settled pastors numbering 61. More than one-fourth of our pastors have in one year changed! This