

THE  
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WHAT ARE DOCTRINES FOR?

WE had a rather amusing answer to this question a few evenings since. While in a friend's house, a gentleman called who was a total stranger to us, but to whom our friend introduced us in due course. Having shortly afterwards to return home, our new-made acquaintance expressed his regret at our departure, "for," said he, "I would like to have a row with you over the doctrines." We left as soon as we could, for our new friend was such a stout and brawny specimen that we would not like to have had a row with him "over the doctrines," or over anything else. But as we went, we could not repress a smile over this idea of doctrines, that they were useful for belligerent men to kick up a row about.

Now, that man is not alone in that view of the worth of religious truths. There is a large class of men who are born pugilists. But instead of using their fists, they use their tongue. They are ever ready for an encounter. The noise of battle, the cannonading of red-hot words, they delight in. To such spirits the mention of any of the doctrines, or the venturing of any opinion upon them, is like firing the first gun, the signal for the fray. It brings them to their feet at once—as in the case of a Toronto clergyman some little time ago—to protest in the name of the Church with which they are identified against the view first presented. Thus through this unfortunate inclination to pugilism, the most impressive doctrines of God's word have been discussed both by tongue and pen with a good deal of anger and malevolence. "Election," or "perseverance," or "baptism," have been the innocent cause of enmity among men who ought not to have been anything else than friends. Indeed, it is much rarer to find men talk calmly over the doctrines, except they happen to view them alike, than to find them growing warm, disputative, chagrined, incensed. It is too often found that discussion turns into personal hits, acrimony, abuse.

We take it, that the truths of Scripture were intended for the illumination of our minds, the sweetening of our hearts, the up-building of our character, and the coronation of our life. Doctrines are to develop everything good in men, and to exorcise everything evil in them. But God never intended His truth to be the signal for a row. And it is a sad disgrace to men who profess to be influenced by that truth to use quarrelsome words either in private or public discussion. Moderation in statement, and mildness in tone, are greatly needed in talking over those parts of Scripture about which there may be diversity of opinion. God's truth is never furthered by the devil's agency. And acrimony and testi-

ness and personalities come up from below, and not down from above. Could men always remember this in their conversations, they could even discuss "the five points" without the slightest endangerment of Christian goodwill and personal friendship. Whatever we do with "the doctrines," let us never allow ourselves to use them for purposes of rancorous debate and the interruption of kindly sentiment.

NATIONAL THANKSGIVING.

TODAY has been appointed as a day of national thanksgiving. It is certain that this holiday will be hailed universally and be observed in a joyous and devout manner. To the Christian household the occasion is a great boon. Relieved from pressing toil and secular care the father and mother can gather their little ones around the family altar, and there pour forth their grateful praises for the goodness of God in providing for their daily wants. The churches will as usual present the delightful spectacle of large congregations worshipping the Giver of every good and perfect gift with one heart and one voice. There will not be wanting many who are too frequently strangers to the House of God, for there is in national thanksgiving an element that appeals to every heart. While many are evidently not touched by a view of the transcendent love of God in giving His Son for redemption from sin, they cannot regard with callous feelings the innumerable gifts of providence by which they are sustained in health and strength. And while it may be a self-interested sentiment that leads them to the sanctuary on a thanksgiving day, we should accept their presence as an acknowledgment of the value of religious service, which may be the beginning of better times for them in regard to the affairs of eternity.

In other years the people as a rule have welcomed the national day of thanksgiving, when, perhaps, there was less reason to repair with jubilant feelings to the sanctuary than there is on the present occasion. Looking back on times of great commercial depression, the suffering of which was intensified by partial failure of the crops, we still feel there was much for which to thank God. It is but an imperfect view of the Divine bountifulness, that will only express itself in grateful words when the harvest has proved to be of more than average value. Even when some staple food has turned out to be less in quantity or quality than we had anticipated, other articles that contribute largely to our sustenance may have yielded a greater than ordinary abundance. If with less than the usual yield of grains and fruits, there is in general the enjoyment of good health, if death has been less busy with young and promising lives, if the dread pestilence that stalks abroad at noon-day, and like a reaper cuts down our fellowmen with unsparing hand, is absent from the record of human calamities, have we not many

obvious reasons on account of which to thank our Heavenly Father? When in addition to these considerations, we are called day by day to inhale the pure air, to rejoice in the light of the sun, to have if not splendid yet suitable clothing upon our persons, to enjoy our sweet homes, with their clean and warm beds, their comfortable hearths, and their enticing pleasures, there is no year in the experience of this country when we should fail to respond heartily to the call to praise the Father of mercies.

"WHAT OF THE NIGHT?"

Every reader of the CANADIAN INDEPENDENT will, we are sure, read with interest the following facts gleaned from the mission fields of the various churches of Christ throughout the world. We hope in future to devote more space to this department than we have been able to do in the past.

THE Japanese government has given permission to a native publisher to print an edition of Genesis in Chinese. This is the first time it has authorized any portion of Scripture to be published.

REPORTS from the foreign mission fields of the Irish Presbyterian Church indicate great progress and promise for the future. The Jewish mission is especially prosperous, and receives constant additions.

AT a recent missionary meeting in one of the Congregational churches, in the neighbourhood of Bristol, in aid of the London Missionary Society, a gold ring set with emeralds and pearls was dropped in the plate.

THERE are twenty Christian chapels in Antananarivo, a city of 100,000 population in Central Madagascar. The observance of the Sabbath day is rigorously kept there. No trade of any kind is permitted and the shops are all closed.

THE Moravian Church now has three hundred and twenty-three preachers engaged in missionary work, with one thousand five hundred and four native assistants, and has made seventy-one thousand conversions in heathen countries.

A NOVELTY in missionary experience is the gift of \$500 to the Rev. Dr. S. R. Brown, as he was leaving Japan for America. The gift came from a Chinaman who was a scholar of Dr. Brown's at Hong Kong, when he was at the head of the Morrison School nearly forty years ago, as a token of gratitude to his old teacher. The converts from heathenism seldom fail in expressions of gratitude, though few of them are able to express it in this way.—*Missionary Herald*.

THE following incident is related by a French paper: A young lady arriving in France last year, was so much delighted with the work done by a Protestant missionary, that she renounced all expensive pleasures and costly dressing, and gave the money thus saved to his assistance. She also sent him three thousand francs to enable him to remove his meetings to a more eligible situation, one result of which was that his hearers were more than trebled. Who will not feel that this young lady is more beautifully arrayed in her garments of praise, than when dressed expensively and mingling in the pleasures of the capital?

AT the latest dates from England, says the "Missionary Herald," the London Missionary Society was still without direct intelligence from Ujiji, as to the safety of the mission party there. Messrs. Souther and Griffith, who were on their way to the interior with Dr. Mullen, continued their journey from Mpwapwa after the death of the latter, and letters have been received from them of so late a date as August 6. They have taken a more northerly route than is common, and they write in glowing terms of their progress and the character of the people they have met, describing them as peaceable, intelligent, and honest. "Our future prospects," they say, "are cheering in the extreme." The mission party of the