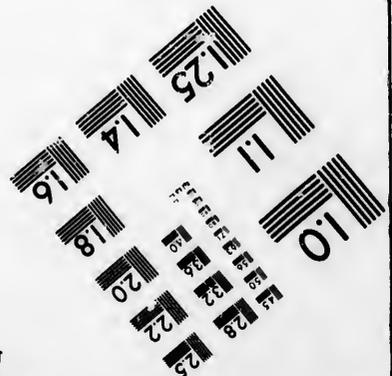
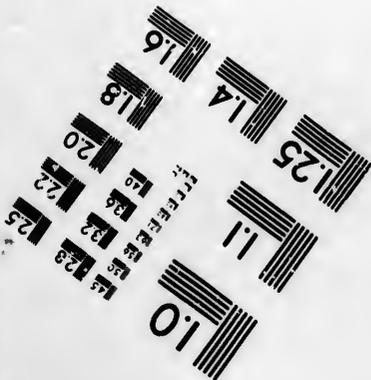
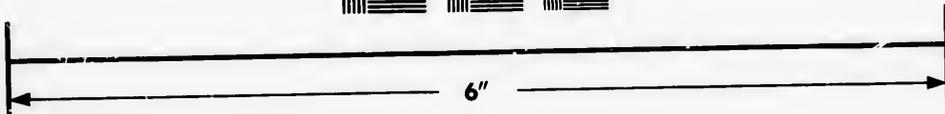
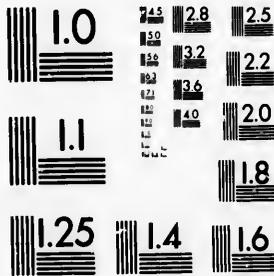


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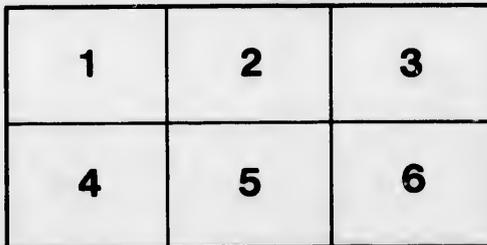
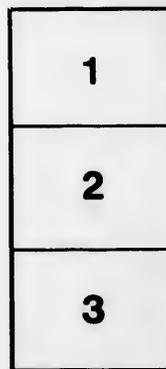
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The Old Paths and the New

SERMON PREACHED

BEFORE THE

St. Andrew's Society

OF THE CITY OF BRANTFORD,

ON

NOVEMBER 30th, 1884,

BY THE

REV. WM. COCHRANE, D. D.

Printed from the Expositor Report.

Brantford :

Printed at the "Expositor" Printing Office

1884

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The annual sermon to the members of the Saint Andrew's Society was preached Sunday evening in Zion Church by the Rev. Dr. Cochrane. There was a very large congregation in attendance, and after appropriate opening exercises, and the anthem—"Behold; how good and pleasant"—from the choir, the text was taken from Jeremiah vi, 16, "Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." The following is the substance of the discourse:—

These words addressed by the prophet to the inhabitants of Judah, are applicable to ourselves and the age in which we live. It may seem foolish that the enlightened, progressive and highly eulogized present should take lessons from the conservative and ignorant past. And yet we may possibly find that modern changes in society and departures from old ways of thinking and living, are not all praiseworthy, and that whatever real improvement and advancement has been made, is due to the labors institutions and principles, undergone, maintained and asserted by our ancestors in days gone by. The remark of Emerson, "that while society has acquired new arts, it has lost its old instincts," is literally true of the present, as contrasted with the past.

THE FORMER DAYS.

We do not say that in everything the

former days were better than these. We are not pessimists. We recognize with gratitude the onward march of civilization and culture that the nineteenth century boasts of, and the earnestness of a still better future for our land and for the world. We do not claim for our forefathers a monopoly of wisdom, or prudence, or virtue, or religion. They were fallible as we are. They had imperfections, and follies, and mistakes in judgment. We do not take them for our guides in solving many intricate questions that were not agitated in their day, and are the outcome of a different state of society than that in which their lot was cast. Nor need we slavishly follow them in manners and customs, which are but the accidents of existence. But believing that in the main they endeavored to conform their lives to the requisitions of a sound morality, and were thus prospered in their endeavors to found systems of civil and religious polity that continue to be the admiration of the world, it is surely the part of wisdom to study their character, the principles which directed them, and the paths in which they walked. If it is the duty of the individual to scan the lessons of the past, so it is of the nation. Young in years compared with the old world, and that empire from which many of us have sprung, it is well to know how in circumstances far more unpropitious than ours, and in spite of persecution and opposition, they acquired such a goodly

heritage, as they have bequeathed to their descendants. With us it is but the beginning of an empire, destined we fondly hope to occupy no mean place, in the fulfilment of God's grand designs with humanity at large. Without being over sanguine, every true patriot can say:—

"I hear the tread of pioneers,
Of nations yet to be;
The first low wash of waves, where soon
Shall roll a human sea.
The rudiments of empire here,
Are plastic yet and warm;
The chaos of a mighty world,
Is rounding into form "

THE OLD PATHS.

The phrase "old paths," means methods of living, maxims approved, truths believed, and principles adopted. The language gives us a hint of the primitive modes of travel in Palestine, where there were, and still are but few roads, and where communication between distant tribes was difficult and tedious. Then by an easy and natural transition, it is used for the habits, manners and dispositions of men, or the fixed methods of legislation and government either in church or state. We know from Scripture, what Israel was in the days when faithful to her law-giver, and observant of his testimonies, she enjoyed his favour and protection. We know also, why God visited her with judgment and dimmed her glory. In the text, the prophet exhorts the Jews to cease from backsliding and divisive courses, that have

been so pernicious and productive of evil. "Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways and see and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." This evening as appropriate to the occasion, we use the text as an exhortation to study the history of that land whence our fathers came, that we may copy those virtues and excellencies that made her so conspicuous and so honorable in the eyes of other nations.

THE FAITH AND PRACTICE OF OUR FOREFATHERS.

Enquiring into the doctrines and practice of our fathers in days gone by, we find :

I. Unmistakeable belief in a living God ; in an overruling providence ; in a revelation from the Almighty to the soul of every man, and in a coming day of judgment. Details as to creeds and confessions, which they at times perhaps unduly magnified, and held too obstinately, need not be referred to. But in regard to those great fundamental actions that are inseparable from any system of religion worthy of the name, they gave forth no uncertain sound.

II. Regarding the word of God as inspired and profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness, they made it a daily study in their homes, and in their schools, and endeavored to regulate, not only their individual conduct, but the nation in its corporate capacity, by

its demands. The conduct of rulers, as well as ruled, was judged by its standard of integrity and honor. What was wrong in the humblest was regarded as a greater wrong in the highest citizen. Frauds perpetrated in high places were considered more dangerous to morals than breaches of the law in private life. With unsparing and impartial justice, king and cottager, prince and peasant, were arraigned before the bar of public opinion and the courts of law regardless of consequences.

III. This stern administration of the higher law brought with it into family and social life a rigor and severity that cannot be understood, and is often most ignorantly and unreasonably vilified. The fact that the older members of the family were entitled to the respect and obedience of the younger, that their commands were to be peremptorily obeyed, that parents were the sole and supreme arbiters in cases of dispute, were matters universally recognized as right and proper, and never called in question. The prompt and impressive infliction of punishment for wrong doing may at times have been excessive, and may have hindered the full flow of that mutual love which secures confidence and attracts the young to the old, but it was infinitely superior to that total disregard of law and order which prevails in the great majority of Canadian homes. The Sabbath in such homes was literally a day of rest. The house of God was the meeting place

for all ages. The Bible and the catechism, and the works of old Puritan and covenanting fathers, were the books read and pondered. These were the moulding and disciplining agencies of the last century, and the subjects of discourse in school and by cottage fireside. "The proud pre-eminence of every Scotchman, was not only that he could read his Bible, but knew its meaning word for word equally with the most learned in the land. Alone of all the peasantry of Europe, the Scottish peasantry as a body could do this, and often by ingleside and wayside,

"reasoned high

Of Providence, foreknowledge, will and fate,
Fixed fate, free will foreknowledge absolute."

Thus her religion and her schools gave her a people which for intellectual fire and sustained strength of purpose has had no equal, and among which there were grand outstanding types of human nature, which continue to this day, to exercise a most commanding influence upon the civilization of the world. The mental food was perhaps heavy and often incomprehensible to tender years. But it produced strong men — thoughtful and critical in the highest degree. With all our improvements in models of Sabbath school teaching and the manifold helps afforded, the youth of the present day know far less of God's word and the saving truths of religion, than the children of a bygone century, whose theology was gained from

the lips of pious mothers, by humble cottage firesides.

SCOTTISH SABBATHS.

We are free to confess that in some cases the sweetness and sunshine which the Sabbath should bring with it were absent, and that trifling infringements and childlike encroachments on the sacredness of the day, were magnified into mortal sins and dealt with accordingly. But if our own fathers erred on the side of strictness, have we not erred in a laxity of behaviour that threatens to blot out the Sabbath from the calendar of holy days? It is here as a nation that we are rapidly deviating from "the old paths," in which the fathers walked. The youth of the present know nothing of the stillness of that day of days, and the blessed effects it left behind upon all classes of the population. Poetry and prose have striven in vain to picture the impressiveness of the Scottish Sabbath morning when the holy murmur of retired prayer, mingled with the distant chant of the cotterman's psalm, and when old men and maidens spent the twilight of the day with the Bible in their hands, and solemn thoughts of unseen things within their hearts, and when God's children met in the solitudes of the forest to enter anew into covenant with their King and feast upon the bread of life.

"Lulled the sea this Sabbath morning,
 Calm the golden-crested glens;
 And the white clouds upward passing
 Leave unveiled the Azure Bens—
 Altars pure to lift to heaven,
 Human hearts' unheard amens."

Says old Alexander Waugh, "Such prayers—such sermons; none such to be heard now a-days. It was a scene on which God's eye might love to look. What are your cathedrals, your choirs, your organs? God laid the foundations of our temple on the pillars of the earth; our floor was nature's verdant carpet; our canopy was the vaulted sky, the Heaven in which the Creator dwells. Nature in all the luxuriance of loveliness;—and lovelier still, and infinitely dearer to God, multitudes of redeemed souls, and hearts purified by faith, singing his praise in grave sweet melodies."

IV In the common relations of life they valued men for what they were, and not for what they had. Mind and morals were esteemed of vastly greater importance than wealth associated with wickedness. The standard of true nobility was that of the poet when he says:

"Worth makes the man, the want of it the fellow."

A man's immoralities were not shielded or excused by his social standing, accidental or acquired. No bribe could change the verdict of the populace or the bar. Forgiveness there might be but condemnation none the less. Crimes which to-day

are palliated and passed over, if not indeed regarded as virtues, were branded with the heated indignation of public opinion. The swindler who by sharp practice robs the widow and orphan, and embezzles the funds of public institutions, but nevertheless walks proudly at liberty, while the petty thief is sent to the penitentiary, would have fared differently in these by-gone days. It was not the clothing of the outward man that gave a passport to homes of refinement, but the character that he bore for purity of thought, chastity of conversation and sincerity of deed. The Christian sentiment of the age regarded the great brotherhood of humanity as strongest of all ties, and blended antagonistic and diverse elements into one. And so it should ever be:

"The riches of the commonwealth
Are free, strong minds, and hearts of health;
And more to her than gold or grain,
The cunning hand and cultured brain."

In the parish schools the rich man's son and the poor man's son sat side by side, and independent of the accident of birth, were treated alike. Position did not excuse stupidity, nor did poverty prevent the attainment of highest honors. Those whom the world venerates to-day and holds in high esteem, owe the grandeur of their lives to the tremendous difficulties which they encountered and overcome. The hard rocks which they quarried are engraven with their names, which are now immortal.

NATIONAL LIFE AND MORALS.

Finally, into the broader fields of national affairs they carried those principles that influenced them as individuals. Politics, as now understood and made merchandise of, they despised. They argued that what was good for the unit, was good for the mass; that an intelligent people were the source of all lawful authority, and had a right to decide what the national faith and life should be. Herein lies the grand difference between the Puritans of England and the Covenanters of Scotland. The Puritan claimed individual liberty, but the Covenanter was not satisfied until he secured the same privileges for his country. The Puritan exiles crossed the sea to enjoy liberty of conscience and freedom of worship without the oppressive enactments of human law; but the Covenanters stood firm on their native soil and fought and gained against overwhelming numbers the battle of the faith. The idea that the word of God should have no recognition in the legislative halls of the nation is a modern and monstrous theory. Our fathers believed that in elevating men to civic honors, regard should be had to morals and Christian principle more than to party and politics. In our day we place partyism and political creed above character, in those days both were taken into account, and no man deemed worthy of responsible office, whose private life did

not stand the honest, candid, but charitable scrutiny of his fellowmen.

THE SCOTLAND OF TO-DAY.

Thus far I have been speaking of what Scotland was a century ago, and subsequent to the Treaty of Union, which did much to raise her commercially, socially, and politically in the scale of nations. I am not speaking of what she is now. In commerce, in wealth, in the increased comforts of the middle classes, in the more general diffusion of secular knowledge, and in many details of social life, she has made substantial progress. But in what constitutes the higher and nobler elements of national greatness, I hardly think she has improved, if indeed she has equalled the past. It is greatly to be feared that in later years Scotland has not maintained the faith and virtues of the fathers. In solid learning she has never excelled the scholarship of the past, though in superficial and ingenious criticisms of long established and accepted beliefs she is at the present day singularly advanced. In piety and devotion she has sadly retrograded since the days of Samuel Rutherford, although in modes of worship, she has made radical changes, and possibly some improvements. In morals, (speaking of the impression made upon a casual visitor) she has sensibly declined, in spite of all the activity of the churches, and the countless agencies at work for the elevation of the

masses. In her crowded cities especially, there is little to encourage the hope that drunkenness, immorality and wretchedness are lessening, under the combined efforts of national education and awakened religious life. And yet, with all these drawbacks and blemishes, she will even now bear favorable comparison with the new world, and in some things be found worthy of imitation.

THE DOMINION OF CANADA.

Our land is indeed a goodly land. No country on the face of the earth gives greater promise of a magnificent future. Its vast extent of territory ; its fertile soil ; its agricultural and mining resources ; its bracing atmosphere ; its constitutional government ; its equal rights and privileges, and its so far peaceful Sabbaths, make it indeed the prospective home for millions of free, independent, prosperous, law abiding subjects. The changes and marvellous progress of the past fifty years cannot indeed be unduly magnified. As, from some mount of vision, we look back and see how the Lord has led us, and hopefully survey the future, have we not good reason to say :

"What change! through pathless wilds no
more,

The fierce and naked savage roams :
Sweet praise along the cultured shore,
Breaks from ten thousand happy homes.

Laws, freedom, truth and faith in God,
 Came with our fathers o'er the waves;
 And where their pilgrim feet have trod,
 The God they trusted guards their graves.

And here Thy name O, God of love,
 Their children's children shall adore;
 Till these eternal hills remove,
 And spring adorns the earth no more."

But with our advancement in material and social comforts, there is I fear little attachment to fundamental truths, and less regard to the practice of every day virtues that constitute real and abiding national growth. Among the more prominent evils, which every true patriot laments let me mention.

First:

THE SKEPTICISM OF THE AGE.

A large number laugh to scorn those "old paths" in which the fathers walked. They cannot see in them either solid happiness to the individual or stability to the nation. The spirit of the age is in revolt against the past. Discoveries in art and science, speculations in philosophy and theology, appliances and adaptations and conveniences to meet the demands of extended commerce and increased facilities for the exchange of thought and good-fellowship among the different peoples of the earth, generate the idea that we had better ignore the experience and gains of the past and follow an entirely different line of conduct. Never was there a period when the spirit of unrest, distrust, doubt and disbelief was so prevalent, when men cared

less for fixed laws of conduct in the business of everyday life and the administration of justice. What are called liberty of conscience, of thought and belief, are tending towards the complete renunciation of settled beliefs, which in other times were entwined in the moral sense, and are essential to right living. Morality itself is in some quarters regarded as a matter of expediency, and religious restraint cast aside as beneath the notice of full grown men. In this whirlpool of uncertainty, many promising youths are not simply giving up old for new faiths, but are in danger of giving up all faith in the primary verities of existence here and hereafter. Nations also are renouncing old established beliefs and customs for novel and untried theories of government, which must inevitably tend to decay and disintegration. It is said that the Legislature of Connecticut, when they first got together before the Revolution, resolved that the colony should be governed by the laws of God in the Old Testament, until they had time to make better. I do not know that either as a colony of Great Britain or a state of the Republic, it has ever yet made better ones. Nor can any nation improve upon the theocratic teachings of the Old Testament or the Christian ethics of the new. The details of government and the customs of the Orient may change, but the ten commandments and the

sermon on the Mount are of universal and continuous application.

Secondly—I mention

THE RACE FOR RICHES.

Another characteristic of our age, is the mad and feverish desire to accumulate wealth, regardless of the means employed. Half a century ago, there were rich men and millionaires, as there are now, but as a rule, capital was gained by plodding perseverance, and not as at the present day by unrighteous speculation, and dangerous ventures, that partake more of the nature of gambling, than honest business transactions. Young men are not satisfied with salaries, far beyond what their fathers started with in life. They affect a style of living and assume an air of importance, that is seldom justified by their means, and ultimately ends in bankruptcy or criminal disgrace. Nor is this tendency confined to young men. The young women of to-day, are not guiltless in the matter. To gratify the extravagant whims of fashion, and the senseless demand for rank and social position, that has become a mania with certain women, homes once happy are ruined, and their peace and contentment destroyed.

Riches need not be despised but they may be, and are, overvalued. Lives are wrecked to possess what after all confers but a nominal advantage. Is what is an Astor, or a Gould, or a Vanderbilt, or a Rothschild, better than the honest workman, who renders ten hours toil from

day to day? Indeed the mechanic or average business man, who has just enough for his day's wants, ought to be far happier than the man who with his immense estates and increasing wealth, passes sleepless nights in worryment about his investments, and in peril lest sudden revulsion in the money market may rob him of his means. He has no dread of robbers to waylay him by night, or snatch his body from the grave when dead. He has none of the vexatious annoyances of law suits, that drive some rich men mad. Contented with such things as he has and assured of the fulfilment of the promise, that the righteous shall not be forsaken, nor his seed begging bread, he seeks no more than his Father sees fit to give :

"Tolling, rejoicing, sorrowing
Onward through life he goes:
Each morning sees some task begin
Each evening sees it close;
Something attempted, something done,
Has earned a night's repose."

When will men cease worshipping the golden calf, under the delusion that riches increase happiness? Happiness only increases with a man's earnings up to a certain point, the point necessary to secure the comforts of life. All beyond this is superfluous, and productive of no good whatever. The richer the man the greater is the probability that his sons will live on billiards, and horse racing, and die in the inebriate Asylum. With a moderate income and contentment of soul, a man

may be happier than a prince. Without contentment he is miserable, even though his wealth equalled the rent roll of a Croesus

Thirdly—I mention :

PRODIGALITY AND PROFLIGACY.

As a result of the increased wealth of our day, these evils are alarmingly prevalent. I name them together, for they are almost invariably associated. Whether the miser or the spendthrift is the more useless to the commonwealth, is immaterial, but certainly at the present day, the latter class far exceeds the former. Riches seem to be sought after, not for the opportunities they afford of doing good, but simply for the gratification of the senses. Thousands are squandered in adorning the body and pampering the appetite, that would go far to relieve the claimant necessities of the poor. Anyone who is acquainted with the paltry sums given by the rich men and so called "fashionable churches" for the support of the gospel and benevolent purposes, in contrast with the amount expended upon amusements and pleasures (not always moral or elevating) cannot fail to mark the tendencies of the age. "Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof—whose god is their belly, and who mind earthly things," is as fitting a description of our age, as of Greece and Rome in days of unbridled voluptuousness.

Such a style of living is moral ruin to any land. The icebergs of Greenland are safer than the luxuriant foliage of a South American forest where death lurks; and the hard fare of a century ago was better than the pampered life of the present.

Fourthly—I mention

THE ARROGANCE OF YOUTH.

The premature development of so-called "men" on the American continent is remarked by every foreigner. Long before they are out of their teens our youth are introduced to society, and fond mothers are anxiously looking round for "suitable settlements" for their children. Before our young men can construe a sentence grammatically, or can repeat the books of the Bible, or have read the history of their own land, far less that of the old world; they are candidates for political honors, and announce their opinions with an air and authority that is amusing to older men, and long before their fathers thought of starting in business on their own account, they open up large establishments—succumb to financial depression—defraud their creditors—make over "their estates" to official assignees, and begin to live the lives of gentlemen of leisure! Any one who knows anything of Canadian youth at the present day, will not deny that such is the prevailing type of embryo manhood. Far be it from me, to make an indiscriminate onslaught on the really clever, pure-

minded, and aspiring minds of the country. The very extravagances and absurdities which are laughed at, may have in them, promise of better things to come, while the sober and sensible and bashful young man, may become nothing more than a very common place citizen. But as a rule genius is not always the product of self conceit.

"The strongest minds,
Are often those of whom the world
Hears least."

The real men of mark wait recognition and do not force their crude ideas upon the public. The Country Parson, in his e-ssay on "Immaturity," says: "A calf knows it is a calf. It n^ot think itself bigger and wiser than an ox, but if it be a reasonable calf, modest and free from prejudice, it is well aware that the joints it will yield after its demise will be very different from those of the stately and well consolidated ox, which ruminates in the pasture near it. But the human boy (we may change it to the Canadian boy) thinks he is a man, and even more than a man. He fancies that his mental stature is as big and solid as it will ever become, and that his mental productions are just what they ought always to be. If spared in the world, and if he be one of those whom years make wiser, he will look back with amazement, if not with shame, upon the crude productions of his youth." Were I addressing to-night a company of young men instead of older ones, I should say to them, in something

of the same strain that an editor once preached a sermon to certain college graduates: "Remember that the world is older than you are by several years, and that for thousands of years it has been full of smarter and better young men than you, and that when the old globe went whirling on, not one man in ten millions went to their funeral, or even heard of their death. Be as smart as you can; know as much as you can; shed the light of your wisdom abroad in the world, but don't imagine a thing is so simply because you say it is, and don't be too sorry for your father, because he knows so much less than you. The world has great need of young men, but no greater need than young men have of it. Your clothes fit you better than your father's fit him and cost more money; and your whole appearance is more stylish; but his homely, scrambling signature on the business end of a cheque will draw more money out of the bank in five minutes than you could get out with a ream of paper and a copper-plate signature in six months. Do not be afraid that your merits will not be discovered. If worth finding you will be found. A diamond is not so easily found as a quartz pebble, but people search for it all the more intensely.

Fifthly and finally I mention.

SELFISHNESS.

The spirit of selfishness, which takes no interest in the welfare of others, if personal

ends are served, and class distinctions or what is familiarly known as "caste," are as prevalent in the new world as in the old. The interests of the rich and the poor man have little in common. Capital and labor stand apart and frown at each other. Oppression and heartless dealing on the part of the one, and insubordination and insurrection on the part of the other are inaugurating a state of things that make thoughtful men tremble lest the infidel communism of the old world may become common in the new. In bygone days, Christian feeling and free intercourse between master and servants made them one: As Macaulay says:

"The Romans were like brothers
In the brave days of old."

While we cannot at once remove the cause for such unseemly strife, let us work and pray for the good time coming, when on the part of large employers there shall be greater consideration shown for the feelings, the health, and the social and moral welfare of their servants; and when workmen shall reasonably judge for themselves as to their rights and obligations without the inflammatory harangues of demagogues, and shall co-operate with their masters in what is best for their mutual interests. "Give me," says a Christian philanthropist, "workshops filled with Christian men, and then confidence in the character of such workers will take the place of suspicion, and consideration of the

master's difficulties, will have a place in the workman's thoughts. Work purified from eye service will then be rendered for wages received, and quietly and gradually, but surely, sweetness, humanity and justice will come up into the important relationship between masters and men." In our churches we shall also see a better state of things. It is true that the rich and poor meet here together, but that is all. They keep apart. The richer members have no knowledge and but little sympathy with the claimant necessities of the poor, and the poor are afraid to touch the garments of the rich, lest they should be rudely repulsed. And yet these are "Brethren in Christ!" They belong to the communion and household of saints: they are members of the same spiritual family and have the same Father and elder brother! what a mockery of religion? How different from apostolic days, when the members of the early church had all things in common, and parted with their possessions as every man had need. "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in trouble, and he shall be blessed upon the earth."

THE REMEDY FOR SUCH WRONGS.

Brethren of the Saint Andrew's Society, these growing evils in the body politic are not beyond cure. To you and all patriotic citizens is committed the task of rectifying what is wrong, extirpating what is bad, and propagating what is pure and virtuous, so

that of all Britain's colonial possessions
Canada may become the fairest and the
best.

" We cross the prairie as of old,
Our fathers crossed the sea ;
To make the West, as they the East,
The homestead of the free !"

It is by individual effort that great re-
forms are effected and nations elevated.
Let your lives be spent

" In pulses stirred to generosity,
In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn
For miserable aims that end with self,"

and then when the battle is over, you
shall pass away, if not amid the lamenta-
tions and wallings of the land you have
loved, at least with the feeling that you
have befriended your brother man, and
made the world your debtor. And then
as was lately done to one of Scotia's sons,
they shall put upon your coffin a St.
Andrew's cross of lilies to speak of Scot-
land and charity : a palm leaf emblematic
of victory ; a sheaf of wheat to tell of a
life fruitful and ripe, and a pillow of
immortelles to speak of rest and immor-
tality.

May a life so beautiful and an end so
happy be the lot of one and all !

