


# Articles Communicated.

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## THE NEW DOMINION.

A large, ornate, black and white decorative initial letter 'T' is positioned at the start of the first paragraph. The letter is highly stylized with intricate floral and vine-like patterns extending from its vertical stem and top bar. The horizontal crossbar of the 'T' is also decorated with small floral motifs.

THE 1st of July, 1867, a day so important to the future of our young country, has come and gone. It has been looked forward to with eager expectation, ushered in by the sweet and solemn strains of the National Anthem rising on the quiet midnight, by the joyous chimes of bells ringing cheerily through the fresh bright morning air: while in our large towns, gay processions,

floating banners, martial parades, the firing of cannon, combined to do honour to the day on which was announced by royal proclamation the union of all the fair Provinces of British North America. People have celebrated a day devoted to joyous recreation in the various ways congenial to their various tastes, by games, by excursions, by happy *picnics* among the woods and waters of our fair and wide-spreading "New Dominion," and have laid up, we may trust, stores of pleasant memories to entwine with the day which ushered us into a new stage of national



existence. May the day itself, so bright, so joyous, so full of the rich maturity of summer beauty and peace, be a happy omen of the era it inaugurated.

Yet in the celebration of the day, whole-souled and enthusiastic as it was, there was one deficiency which could not but make itself painfully felt by those who feel that "except the Lord build the house they labour in vain that build it," that all our hopes, and plans, and projects for the advancement of our country must come to nought unless "God, even our own God shall bless us." It would have been a noble spectacle, becoming surely to our position as a professed Christian nation, and full of happy augury for our future, had that bright July morning beheld our Canadian people assembling together with one heart to implore a blessing from the God of our fathers upon the new prospects opening before us. One would think that the experience of even the last few years would have taught us that our destinies are not in our own hands, and that without the blessing of Him who rules the seasons, even the earth will not yield her increase. But, from whatever cause, our senators did not seem to think of the need of a public national recognition of this truth, and our City Councils and Celebration Committees were far too much occupied with the arrangement of appropriations, the procuring of fire-works &c., &c., to think of anything so *impractical* as hallowing the day by a solemn religious service. One or two suggestions indeed were made on the subject and in one place at least, a Union Prayer Meeting took its place among the celebrations of the day; we may be sure too that from many Christian hearts and Christian families arose fervent prayers that the future of our beloved land might be blessed by Him whose blessing alone maketh rich; yet it is none the less true that, as a *nation*, we entered upon this new stage of national existence without any reference to the God who guides the destinies of nations as well as of men. No blessing from on high has been publicly invoked, to hallow the new order of things, no united thanksgivings offered to Him whose over-ruling Providence has brought about what we hope to be for the welfare and advancement of our country.

Among the heathen Greeks and Romans, any such public event would have been inaugurated by sacrifices and libations, by consultations of the auguries and invocations of the divinities who, they believed

controlled their destinies. Among the Jews living in, as we are inclined to think, a light so much less clear than our own, we know that great national events were consecrated by solemn sacrifice, by thanksgivings and supplications to the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob. But now, after eighteen centuries of the brighter light of the Gospel dispensation have shone upon the world, we feel no necessity for invoking the Divine blessing on our public acts, for asking divine interposition as a Christian nation, in our national concerns. We may not so express it, possibly in our thoughts, but it amounts to the *practical* expression of the feeling that we have done enough if we pay a certain amount of respect to the outward rites of religion, and that the Divine aid and guidance which it is a most important feature of our Christian faith to believe that God gives to His people, is something which lies out of our ordinary life altogether, and with which we can very well dispense. It is a sad state of matters when our boasted Christianity sinks into practical infidelity, and one that augurs but ill for our real prosperity while the eternal words stand true "Them that honour me, I will honour."

The results of Confederation, while still somewhat vague, are likely to be eminently favourable to our material advancement. Consolidating the powers and resources of the provinces and giving unity to our acts and interests and a fresh impulse to our development, commercial, scientific, military and educational; there can be no doubt, that in spite of some drawbacks, the act just accomplished will tend greatly to raise our position as a people. But in connection with these results there rests upon every individual of our people no small responsibility. As it is scarcely less true of nations than of individuals, that the effects of early influences act with tenfold power on their after development, it rests in no small degree with the present people of Canada to determine what its character shall be, when succeeding generations shall have made it, what it will in all probability become, a great nation. If evil which might now easily be checked, is left to increase till it has gained such magnitude and power as to be almost beyond human interposition, if good that might be done is left undone, while selfish apathy ties our hands and reduces us to inaction, will not the guilt of such neglect rest upon us who have thus abused our trust?



It is not the *material* interests of Canada which are most likely to suffer from indifference and apathy. To these we are in general pretty wide awake. Even as to the question of military defence, with regard to which we were long reproached with culpable carelessness, Canada has been pretty thoroughly aroused, and our gallant volunteers would vie with each other in eagerness to repel the invader, should an enemy attack our borders. But there are evils as much greater and more enduring in their results as moral interests exceed in importance physical ones; enemies far more insidious and destructive than any visible foe with whom we could be called upon to contend. And these enemies, if we love our country, we are called upon to resist with all the force we can muster. There is the demon of Intemperance, stealing silently through the land, marking out its thousands of victims, striking down with its deadly aim some of our best and noblest, often scarcely betraying its presence till the fatal effects of its insidious influence are seen. We may not indeed all agree upon the question of *total abstinence*, but surely there is no man with the heart of a christian and a patriot, who will not seek by whatever means may seem to him the most effectual, to discourage that habitual use of intoxicating liquors which is already making such ravages among us. *How* to do so is a serious problem and one to which scarcely too much thought and energy can be directed, and if, as is natural, we do not all arrive at the same solution, we can at least give each other the right hand of fellowship, and aid and encourage each other's efforts to follow out the common aim.

But if intemperance slays its thousands, it is scarcely too much to say that *worldliness* slays its ten thousands. It is the prevailing sin and canker of the age, and in a new country it is natural that its influence should be even stronger than in an old one. Where bare subsistence is often a desperate struggle, where even a moderate portion of the good things of life is usually so hardly earned, it is perhaps not to be wondered at, that these good things acquire a most disproportionate importance and engross far too much the minds of hard-working colonists. But there can be no doubt that the insidious poison of worldliness is working to a fearful extent among us, choking with its rank growth the good seed which might otherwise spring up a hundred-fold, blunting our perception of higher things, and paralysing our efforts towards real good, as

if a man's life consisted in the abundance of the things which he possesseth, and not in the perfection of his immortal nature, reaching far beyond the things of time and sense into the infinite vista of a certain eternity! Gold,—position,—advancement,—these are really with the majority of us the chief good, and that which is to last when these are but empty echoes of the past, is too often, alas! forgotten.

It is only a natural sequence of worldliness that *practical infidelity* should increase and prevail. When we become absorbed in material interests we lose our realising sense of the things unseen and eternal, and losing this we practically lose our belief in them, for we can scarcely be said to believe what we do not in the least realise. Our faith in the Christianity which is our best national heritage, is to a great extent becoming cold and lifeless. The religion we profess we cannot trust to work the marvels which we are told it is commissioned to accomplish. "In this sign (the cross) thou shalt conquer," no longer inspires our efforts. We distrust it, whether for ourselves or for others, and when faith by which we might remove mountains is gone, all is lost.

Then there are the dark shadows of *superstition* and *ignorance* connected by many invisible links with the evils already mentioned, since wrong never stands alone and isolated, but extends its tendrils and connects itself in an intricate and almost indivisible network with other wrongs. Superstition indeed must necessarily follow where ignorance leads. It enters into every form of faith. It scarcely matters much whether it consists in trusting to a formula of *words*, or to a formula of outward *rites*, the spirit is the same in both, and "evangelical" formalism may be as dangerous and soul destroying as the ritualistic or the Roman Catholic. And it often happens that hearts chilled and deadened by worldliness and practical infidelity fall the readiest victims to a superstitious formality.

That *ignorance* prevails to an increasing extent in Canada, no one who knows much of the population of our large towns will doubt. Our Common School system is often proudly extolled. But our common schools are *not* doing the work they ought; they do *not* reach to the lowest strata of our population;—it is to a great extent only the children of the *respectable* who are being educated. Hundreds of children are growing up in our cities, untaught and un-



trained, growing year by year more degraded and confirmed in vagabond habits and immoral practices which *must* humanly speaking, in course of time make them the criminals of our prisons and the curse of the country. By timely and energetic interposition this might be prevented,—soon it will be too late, and by the natural course of events the evil must grow and extend. There are numbers of families now sinking in degradation who by prompt Christian aid might still be elevated, but who will soon otherwise form the nucleus of an ever-increasing “sunk population” as degraded and as difficult to reform as that toward which the Christians of Britain are now directing such heroic efforts.

All these evils we might, each and all of us, do *something* to obviate and remove, and surely that *something* we are imperatively called upon to do,—called upon by the instinctive voices of patriotism and philanthropy, but still more strongly by the sweet but solemn voice of the master who says to every professing disciple—“Go work in my vineyard.” Writers, not professedly Christians, are doing much at present to show how closely nations are connected together, so that the well being of *all* is needed for the highest well-being of *any*, and there cannot be true national prosperity where a *part* is left to fester in corruption and be a centre of poisonous influence to the rest. Writers, whom we do not call *orthodox*, expose in vivid colours the evils of that systematized worldliness which, engrossed in money-making, has ceased even to care for the general good; and show how the Christian Church is forgetting one great end of her existence—that of being an organization for extending through the world the blessings which Christianity has it in its power to bestow. There is no doubt that many professing Christians scarcely think of the faith they profess as affecting their position towards others. “Am I my brother’s keeper?”—is the practical language of many a heart. But surely, if we have any portion of the spirit of Him who gave Himself for many, and the essence of whose teaching is love and sacrifice,—we will feel how culpable is such selfish apathy, and shake it off.

The evils already mentioned are by affecting all that might be enumerated as no quiring the true well-being of the country. But if the large body of professing Christians in Canada would but awaken to a sense of the duties of their high calling, and to an energetic discharge of them, how soon

would such evils disappear from among us! What a happy change might be effected if even the members of our *own* Church, constituting so large, influential, and intelligent a portion of the Canadian people,—were aroused to an effectual sense of their responsibilities, and, feeling that the mere discharge of the ordinary duties of their professions or worldly calling did not exhaust *all* the claims devolving upon them, were to endeavour with all their strength, as opportunities arose, to repress evil and encourage good; applying all scientific and political wisdom to the amelioration of what is amiss, but, above all, bringing the truth of the everlasting Gospel to bear upon the moral evil it is commissioned to destroy. What a rich contribution to the prosperity of the “New Dominion” it would be, were our own Church thus to fulfil her high calling, and towards such a development of its powers every reader of the *Presbyterian* has it in his or her power in some measure to contribute. Happy would it be if we could apply Tennyson’s invocation to the Christmas bell, to the chimes that rang in the morning of Dominion Day!—

“Ring out the want, the care, the sin,  
The faithless coldness of the times;  
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,  
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,  
The civic slander and the spite,  
Ring in the love of truth and right,  
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease,  
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold,  
Ring out the thousand wars of old,  
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,  
The larger heart the kindlier hand;  
Ring out the darkness of the land,  
Ring in the Christ that is to be.”

May such blessings as those here invoked rest upon the nation whose birthday we have just inaugurated, and may the day not be far distant, when the Christian spirit which breathes in the following lines, taken from a New Dominion lyric by one of our Canadian poets, may penetrate every branch of its national existence! .

“Not in pride the firm foundations  
Of an empire we would lay;  
Trusting in the God of nations  
We would keep our Natal Day;  
Trusting that the sacred promise,  
Made to all those that believe,  
Will not now be wrested from us—  
Ask ye, and ye shall receive.”

“Hear us then, mysterious power,—  
God whom all the earth shall own—



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Make this an auspicious hour—  
Lay for us our corner-stone;  
Lift thy hands in blessing o'er us,  
Bless us Lord from sea to sea,  
Pointing to the hopes before us  
And the future yet to be."

"He hath laid our broad foundation  
Leaving us to build thereon,  
Lo, we stand among the nations,—  
God, our living corner-stone."

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