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I am, your's respectfully,
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Owen Sound, Aug. 18th, 1888.

Bishop Carman on Prayer.

PRAYER.—An extended controversy on prayer has been a leading topic in some of our daily papers for some weeks past and we give the following, from the Globe of the 7th inst., which is a keen and somewhat ironical analysis of the question, and will doubtless be read with interest.

Rev. Bishop Carman, being interviewed on the Prayer controversy, said he thought some of the contentions of the anti-prayer people might possibly be treated too gravely. Dr. Carman then spoke as follows—partly in an ironical and partly in a serious tone—his remarks constituting, in the Globe's opinion, one of the most convincing utterances yet given on the subject under discussion. He said:—

"The joke for July, if it were not on so serious business, would be the tug on the prayer problem by atheists, agnostics, infidels, materialists, evolutionists and even some Christian ministers who give up their vocations to watch wolves in wool even in editors' sanctuaries. If all cavillers at prayer and ridiculers of praying people would spend their strength in honest prayer they would find out more about it than in their present mind they want to know.

"What is prayer anyhow? What would we know about it but for the Bible? Why should we set type in a printing office to learn astronomy, use the microscope to find out the taste of sugar or cherries, or read in a grammar or geometry to ascertain the texture and quality of cloth? If we really desire to know anything of prayer, why not go where we learn everything of it, and without which instruction we know nothing at all about it? For it is one thing to have a desire, an instinct, an aptitude, a predisposition, a capability; it is entirely another thing to know how to direct, improve and apply it.

"Why don't those lazy preachers bring down rain on parched districts? In default thereof, should not their salaries be stopped or prayers stopped? Why don't they keep off earthquakes, malaria, potato bugs, smallpox and cholera? Why don't they do something for a living, to be sure? Make some return to the people whose hard earnings they secure by delusion? Why don't they beat their tomtoms, multiply and vary their charms and spells, and repeat their incantations? Why don't they dance, and leap, and sweat and pray? Why don't they get rain of the God they worship, and into whose fear they would like to cajole us all?

"What, after all, if it be the prayers of these very men, praying better and longer than they think, that produce, bring down upon the land, this very drought? What, after all, if these splendid midland counties are parched through their prayers? Surely their prayers ought to be good for something. Verily they ought to pray to God, if prayer is of any use, by some means or other to save the poor drunkard; by some means or other to save the youth of the land from growing up in drunkenness. These midland counties can beat the world on barley. So far as I know there is no section all the way from the central sea to the belts of Jupiter or the rings of Saturn that can give the berry such a fulness, richness and color as this fat Valley of the Bay. The Great Ruler of the Universe, if He care for any of these things, might prefer to burn up barley fields and blast beer and whiskey crops rather than burn up living men and expose them to everlasting burnings. If this world be under a moral Government—and even Deists say as much—a deprivation or a warning might do us no harm. Rich pastures, waving grain, full dairies, abounding flocks and herds of course beget gratitude to the Giver, and out of their abundance, instead of gratifying themselves, pampering their lusts, increasing their sensual and carnal pleasure and sin, the people pour of their enlarged store into the treasuries of the Lord, the works of benevolence and the succor of humanity. We squander so little of our substance, waste so little of it in war, intemperance and vice, accumulate it with much honesty, preserve it in such integrity and distribute with such care love and liberality that we ought to get rain right off. I do not know but, like the antediluvians, we deserve a downpour for forty days and forty nights, and likely only the covenant keeps it off. Not that I think that the people of the midland counties are sinners above all men that dwell in Ontario, but having lived in this section for many years, I judge we have received at least as much as we have used faithfully for the good of man under the moral government of God. I notice even this dry summer you wouldn't know on circus day there is any drought.

"They used to say 'Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine.' If the preachers' prayers against drunkenness and for sobriety, industry, quiet; for healing broken hearts and restoring ruined homes are worth anything, probably they ought to bring a drought, and possibly drought in the barley fields may help them. Once a man prayed that because of the idolatry of the people and the wickedness of the rulers it might not rain; and it rained not, so the Book says, by the space of three years and six months. Perhaps one of the best things the Elijahs of this hour could do, yes possibly their solemn duty, is to cry to God that it rain not till men feel their dependence and cease to turn titles of blessing into floods of cursing. But some of them are afraid that those ravens that brought bread and flesh in the morning and bread and flesh in the evening are dead long ago. It might hurt their income, especially if any of it came out of breweries or distilleries, to be heard publicly pleading on the Sabbath that cursed be the barley. Iried up by the barley, wheat and hops that go to drunkenness and greedy gain; leaving us enough in mercy for our bread or our salvation.

"We learn astronomy with the telescope. We learn the flavor of cherries by tasting them. We come at primary elements by chemical analysis, and verify by experiment. We get geometry and grammar by teachers and books. Why not give prayer half the chance? Why not go to its organ, the Holy Scriptures? 'Oh, that is taking everything as granted at the start.' Is it taking everything as granted at the start to use the tables and the telescopes? Is it taking everything as granted in philosophy to use Aristotle's organon or Bacon's, and test it and prove it as every scholar does? The Praying Master says, 'Whosoever things ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them.' Unhappy desire, the agony of starving millions, does not make prayer. Praying faith does not make prayer. But the right faith and the right faith linked by the right asking make praying power. 'This is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us, and if we know that

He hear us, whatsoever we ask we know that we have the petitions we desired of him.' It is to ask what ye will and it shall be done according to his will. 'If ye shall ask anything in my name I will do it.' Now try the multiplication table on the more rain. Put the rule on the prayer. 'Grant on O Lord like the highest possible price for it, so that we remember the happy time when the wheat was war, slaughtering its thousands, gave us more dollars a bushel for wheat. Now we want more beer, and we will have more flour and luxuries, and perhaps we can lift some of the mortgages that our worldliness and extravagance, Oh, give us more rain, more pasture for our obsessive flocks and herds, more hope and more barley for more beer, and more rye and more whiskey—we hardly like to say for the Emperor's sake—we just say, Amen.' Why don't the preachers go at it and pray up rain?

"If they have any business here at all, to claim to the people's respect and support, they represent a kingdom, older, firmer, broader, mightier, grander than the British Empire, they guard its interests and are governed by its King, their King, the Lord God Almighty, govern the world for moral purposes, and not for the sake of beer. 'When these moral purposes are frustrated, he cannot enter the physical realm, he cannot change, suspend, abrogate natural laws, agnostics say. For a high and providential purpose the Legislature of Ontario cannot interfere with the law. 'No, no; we are believers in the constancy, the unalterability of law. We are the Ontario Legislature cannot, to save a whole Province, change municipal law, to suspend some local regulation.' The local regulation must of course take precedence, and the county road or great railway through the altogether out of its lines and bearings, over a great public inconvenience and the immense damage of trade. That is the way we do things in this country. The Imperial law, when the safety or honor of the Empire is at stake, or the welfare of all her Majesty's subjects endangered, cannot touch the Provincial law of course; but our Provincial local regulations can block the way of the entire authority and power of the Crown. This Royal authority, then, cannot suspend its own Act or touch a Provincial Act to save the Empire. 'No, no. We believe in the constancy of law, the immutability of law, we never think of a higher law's setting aside, and temporarily, a lower law, of an Imperial law suspending or vetoing a Colonial law, and so never petition the Queen, praying her Majesty to help us in the Colonies. Men ought to see that they are agnostics and have public license to ignorance and stupidity; there is higher law and lower law, and there is philosophy enough to even a miracle. There is universal law and local law. And the moral law of God is the universal law and underlies, comprehends, permeates, justifies and energises all physical law. Prayer is a moral act under the moral government and law, and so has all physical law for moral purposes, not for whims and caprices, not for wishes or woes, but for the good of man and the glory of God at its finger ends. Men ignorant of the things, whatever else they know, may cry out prayer; but thousands of praying men and women, at least as intelligent as they, are daily, hourly, working the realities of prayer into the tissues of their being and the fabric of their life as positively and as perceptibly as they are able, hunger and eating, working beef into their muscle and bread into their bone. What kind of a country should we have, what kind of people should we be, if all were these magnificent cavillers and harpies?

"Isn't it strange that the Lord Almighty should, by anybody that admits His existence, be thought incapable, in His local and temporary arrangements—for what are earthly rain laws but local laws in the great universe of God?—of doing what any day the Parliament or Legislature would dismiss its Premier for profession of incapability to do, this is, incapability to secure the interest, the good of the Dominion or Province, because, forsooth, some county or township resisted, refused to be crossed say by a canal or railroad?"

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