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EASTERN GENERAL AGENT.

MR. WALTER KERR—for many years an esteemed elder of our Church—is the duly authorized agent for THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN. He will collect outstanding accounts, and take names of new subscribers. Friends are invited to give any assistance in their power to Mr. Kerr in all the congregations he may visit.



TORONTO, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 1885.

THE number of families reported in the Blue Book last year was 68,421; the number this year is 71,833, an increase of 3,412. The committee state "with all emphasis and plainness," that several congregations do not report the number of their families and give it as their opinion that sessions, deacons' courts and managers should know the number of families in the congregations under their care; certainly they should. The number of single persons reported last year was 8,717; the number this year 9,303, an increase of 586. Three city congregations one in Toronto, one in Quebec, and one in Montreal do not report the number of their families. Six city congregations two in St. John, one in Montreal, one in Ottawa, one in Kingston and one in Toronto—do not report the number of their single persons. If they do not report them next year we shall be under the painful necessity of naming these congregations as Dr. Torrance does in his report. The total number of communicants is 123,444, an increase of 5,114. The number added this year by profession of faith was 9,036; by certificate, 4,997, being an aggregate of 14,033. The number attending our Sabbath schools and Bible classes is 99,059, an increase of 4,678. As a number do not report, we might make round numbers and say the church teaches a hundred thousand young people. The number of teachers is 11,014, an increase of 242. The number of ruling elders is 4,626, an increase of 160. The other office-bearers, deacons, managers, business men who look after the finances, number 7,284, an increase of 336. The total number of pastoral charges is 873; vacancies, 159; ministers in charge, 714.

FOR several days "Canada's Great Show" has been in full blast in Toronto, and Ontario's great show has been in operation in London. Both seem to have been unusually successful. The enterprise, skill and wealth of our people increase every year. Not many years ago the number of exhibitors was small at a Provincial Exhibition. A few wealthy breeders from half-a-dozen localities carried off all the prizes for cattle; a few manufacturers monopolized the honours in their department, and perhaps less than a dozen horse fanciers owned all the fine horses. Now the honours go over all the country. The finest animal on the ground may come from a locality scarcely ever heard of until its name appears on the prize-list. Wealth is distributed; enterprise is general. Nor is Canada a country in which "wealth accumulates and men decay." We might challenge the world to show a better-informed, better-dressed, better-behaved class of men and women than those who met within the last few days in Toronto and London. Old England could produce a larger number of millionaires, but along with them would be a larger number of paupers. A year ago we heard a gentleman say that he had been on the grounds in Toronto every day during the show and had not seen one drunken man nor heard one oath. Whatever politicians and cynics may say to the contrary, the people are improving. Just here seems a good place to say that the well-dressed multitude did not seem to be suffering from the "hard times" about which we hear a good deal. We have none of them

say anything about "hard times" when the missionary collector comes round. Certainly there was nothing in the appearance of the thousands who gathered in Toronto and London to suggest "hard times."

THE *Interior*—a journal always conspicuously fair and candid in dealing with the pulpit as well as with the pew—says:

We have in this country every Sabbath a great many good sermons, and yet we have very little good preaching. If preachers would give less attention to their topics and more to getting into sympathy with their audiences, they would be more successful. The want of pulpit power is largely in what Paul called "utterance." Garrick said that ministers failed in the church while he succeeded in the theatre, because they presented truth as if it was fiction, but he presented fiction as if it was truth. Don't let the brethren be afraid of earnestness. It is an element of power.

There is a great difference between "good sermons" and "good preaching." A minister may be able to put the best possible sermon on paper and be a very poor preacher. Is it not probable that college training has a good deal to do with the difference between good sermons and good preaching? The student puts his college exercises on paper and reads them, when they are written he looks upon them as finished. His trial sermons for license are written, and read and his lecture, homily and sermon at his ordination are also written and read. What more natural than for the young man to think that the main thing about preaching is to put a good sermon on paper? What more natural than to think that when he has put a good sermon on paper the principal part of his work is done? The real work of preaching begins just at that point. What difference does it make to a congregation what a preacher has on his manuscript if he cannot deliver it? Not one in a thousand of them care a farthing what he has on his paper or whether he has a paper or not. They judge the man mainly by what he says and how he says it, not by what he has written. Good sermons are needed certainly, but good preachers are not nearly so plentiful as good sermons.

ON the subject of unrest in congregations, the Rev. Mr. McMullen makes the following pithy and timely remarks:

The peace of congregations is very seldom wrecked over a great question. It is almost invariably over some trifle. When Satan wants to hold up the Church to public derision, a great question would not serve his purpose. He must get the saints squabbling about "organ or no organ," "gown or no gown," "black gown or white surplice," "Amen" or "Amen!" A few carry on such controversies, and the great body of the people are pained. Can a system of church polity be devised which will render it impossible for ministers and people to contend about trifles?

No system of church government can be devised that will prevent ministers and people from wrangling about such trifles. A fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit is the only real preventive. Men in earnest about the salvation of souls never enter into controversies about gowns and melodeons, "awmen" and "amen." To speak of remedying this evil by changing a system of church polity is as absurd as to propose to bring a corpse to life by changing the horses that draw the hearse. The root of the evil is deep down in the human heart. The only and all-sufficient remedy is the power of the Holy Spirit. When worshippers are concerned chiefly about the power of the Holy Spirit in the congregation and the salvation of their own souls, the souls of their families and of their neighbours, they will stop wrecking congregations about trifles. Mr. McMullen strikes the nail squarely on the head when he says that Satan is at the bottom of all these troubles. Let that fact be once fully recognized and we have made considerable progress towards a remedy. Hitherto the "wreckers" of churches about trifles have been allowed to pose too much as heroes and martyrs who were willing to fight or die for principle. The fighting has usually been with better Christians than themselves and the only thing that died was the good name of the congregation in which the fight took place. A fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit and a thorough awakening of the Church to her great mission of saving souls is the proper remedy for all this pottering over trifles.

THE commission that has been taking evidence in regard to the management of the Central Prison made a tour through several of the neighbouring States and visited a number of prisons there in order to obtain information on the subject of prison discipline. This was a wise thing to do. Our neighbours manage their institutions well, and we may learn a point or

two from them. We understand that the system of giving indefinite sentences, which Judge Sinclair condemned so strongly, is in operation in several of the best managed prisons on the other side. It may be true, as Judge Sinclair said, that sentencing a prisoner to confinement in a dark cell for an indefinite period is not in accordance with the principles of scientific jurisprudence. Judges certainly do not sentence prisoners in that way; but the warden of a prison is not a judge. We cannot for the life of us see anything harsh in putting a scamp in a cell until he promises to behave himself. He can fix the limit of the sentence himself. All he has to do is promise amendment and the punishment ends. He is far more likely to promise to behave himself if no time has been fixed for his release than if he knows he will get out at the end of twenty-four or forty-eight hours whether he promises amendment or not. Of one thing the Government, the commission and everybody connected with the investigation may rest assured: the people of this Province don't want the Central Prison made a "pleasant winter retreat," where two or three hundred scamps may feed well and enjoy themselves during the cold weather. For the insane, the idiotic, the deaf, the dumb, and the blind in fact for all our people who are not able to take care of themselves—the rate-payers of Ontario are willing to make ample provision. We support as willingly as any people in the world the unfortunates who are unable to support themselves. But the honest, hard-working ratepayers of this country do not propose to tax themselves any more than they can help, to keep two or three hundred lazy, idle blackguards in a life of luxury at the Central Prison. There are thousands of honest working men in Ontario to-day who do not fare as well as these insolent scamps. The fact that so many of them come back a second time shows that they have little fear of the punishment.

THE EDICT OF NANTES.

EARLY in the sixteenth century it seemed as if the doctrines of the Reformation would find general acceptance throughout France. The revival of learning captivated many minds uninfluenced by spiritual conviction. To religious progress, with the exception of Margaret of Valois and her spiritual director, the Court was indifferent; but it eagerly welcomed the classic renaissance. Calvin and Beza with devoted co-labourers endeavoured to extend the knowledge of evangelical truth with a remarkable degree of success. The representatives of the dominant Church were early alarmed, and entered on a contest for the suppression of the Reformation, which might be said to have culminated in the dreadful tragedy of St. Bartholomew's Day.

During the present year on this Continent and in Europe the descendants of the Huguenots are holding commemorations of the eventful struggles in which two centuries ago their ancestors were engaged. Friends and foes alike concede that it would have been immensely better for France to-day had the tyranny and persecution to which the adherents of the French Reformation were so persistently subjected been of a less relentless character. The best and noblest blood of France, shed remorselessly, has left an indelible stain on the annals of that nation. In the protracted indignities heaped on successive generations, and in the final expulsion of her worthiest citizens, France was guilty of a suicidal act, which many among her own people are disposed to look upon as irreparable.

The Huguenots were the precursors of civil as well as of religious liberty. The Republican idea, now so generally entertained in France, was for a time cherished by those who felt the repressive and unjust exercise of arbitrary regal power. Their advanced views in politics and religion necessarily aroused against them the bitter hostility of a feudal despotism and the relentless persecution of a corrupt Church. They grew rapidly in numbers and influence; but this only made the conflict more bitter and determined.

Soon after the accession of Henry IV. to the throne, they obtained in 1598 from that vacillating monarch the concessions contained in the Edict of Nantes. Though this measure did not bring them all the relief and protection they desired and were entitled to, they continued to gain adherents and power until Louis XIV. began to exercise his harassing policy for their extinction. One by one their liberties were encroached upon and their privileges withdrawn. They were for-