

THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

\$2.00 PER ANNUM IN ADVANCE.

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OFFICE—NO. 5 JORDAN ST., TORONTO.

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TORONTO, FRIDAY, JANUARY 4, 1878.

CHURCH DEBTS.

OUR Presbyterian friends in the United States seem to have been suddenly seized with a wholesome horror of debts and mortgages connected with their Church property. They have a Don Quixote, bearing the name of Kimball, who has discovered that his mission is to cut the rope of the millstone of debt which is dragging to destruction a goodly proportion of ecclesiastical buildings. This gentleman like warriors in general has a preference for Sunday as a suitable time for waging battle. He usually mounts the pulpit with the minister of the congregation whose mortgage is to be attacked. The pastor conducts devotional exercises as a fitting prelude to the work on hand. Mr. Kimball then turns up his coat sleeves, and commences his first round. He makes the conditional promise that, if half a dozen gentlemen will give five thousand dollars each, he will also contribute five thousand. Having succeeded in this and time being called, the second round commences, the auctioneer in the sacred desk calling for sums of four thousand, heading the list with four thousand himself. Having easily slain the giants—those who stand for values of say from five thousand to one thousand dollars—the Quixote has a more difficult task with the smaller fry who represent all possible sums embraced within hundreds of dollars and tens and fives. On the principle that it is easier to shoot an elephant than a lot of vermin, it now takes hours to foot up the hundreds for the one hour that secured the thousands. So slow indeed are the repeated rounds with the enemy, that Mr. Kimball is sometimes obliged to postpone the attempt at further liquidation till the following Sunday, when the laggards are generally obliged to capitulate. The work is then finished. The debt is extinguished. The congregation are called to sing, "Praise God from Whom all blessings flow."

We had thought that this pulpit auctioneering was confined to our Methodist brethren. But while our soul recoiled from the sight of

turning away the House of God from its proper object of worship, it seemed a redeeming qualification that this practice was almost confined to Methodists. Somehow it seems natural for them to do this kind of thing. But Mr. Kimball thoroughly beats the Methodists on their own ground. In the Bloor St. Methodist Church, a man of vast auctioneering ability was brought a long distance and was paid handsomely for the work. This Mr. Kimball, however, like a man, heads or foots the list with his five or ten thousand dollars. But here is the rub. Where does this gentleman get the money to do the handsome in this fashion? Mr. Kimball is not a man of wealth. Were he some eccentric millionaire, and taking this way of doing a nobly generous deed, the feeling of sacrilege caused by turning the church into a house of merchandise might be got over. The congregation would tolerate the thing for once, considering that the successful liquidation of their debts would make its repetition useless or impossible. But Mr. Kimball is neither rich nor eccentric, and how is the miracle accomplished? There is no other conclusion than that the whole thing is planned and pre-arranged. The leading spirits are let into the secret. They are ready to spring to their feet with their one, two or five thousands, and a whole lot more, like sheep whose leader has jumped the fence, rush to the subscription paper and write down their names for corresponding amounts.

Much as we like the idea of a Church being free of debt, we confess that the plan of Mr. Kimball is one not to be commended. It is not for us to say one word against his motives or the spirit which animates his work. The ends he has in view are excellent, and we doubt not he is a man of great practical wisdom, who realizes the fearful nature of debt and wishes to have the Churches relieved of such an incubus. But we do not admire the system which he has inaugurated. However well it may suit other denominations, it is not in our opinion adapted to our own. Our people do not like to be coerced into giving what is beyond their ability. They are not easily influenced by the impulse of competition. They like to consider what they are about, and not to be involved through an emulative spirit in a burden beyond their income or not in accordance with their inclination. Christians will always give from principle. They take the matter before the Lord, and in the conclave of the family they weigh well what is required for household expenses, and what may be the proportion of profit after they have paid their lawful debts. We do not say that Presbyterians as a rule come up to this standard. But we do say that this plan of giving is that which is generally pursued in our churches, and which has been endorsed over and over again by our Church courts. As to the Presbyterian Church in Canada, we feel safe in asserting that were this Mr. Kimball to appear in the manner described before any one of our congregations, however burdened with debt, instead of getting bids and succeeding by appeals to the competitive spirit in man, there would be the likelihood of the gentleman finding himself left alone in the church. Fancy one of our congregations assembling to worship God on the holy Sabbath, and instead of the usual

services of praise and instruction, being called out one by one as to who shall bid highest in the matter of the liquidation of debt. The people would leave in disgust, and the failure of the attempt would be manifest. This would be the case with our members, even at the opening of a church; but how much more would it be the case were an effort like that of Mr. Kimball made to take their pockets by storm?

And we say this in the full conviction that the Presbyterian Church is not behind in the matter of giving. Let our readers only consider the growth of this Church in Canada, its great enterprise in building churches and manses, its vast contributions to Home and Foreign Missions, its munificent support of schools and colleges, and they will see what a grand aggregate is yearly reached without resorting to questionable means and doubtful plans. To this subject of Church Debts we hope to return in another issue, and then we will consider the whole question in its bearings upon Church extension and Church work.

MANITOBA COLLEGE.

THE following circular has been addressed to pastors of congregations. We sincerely trust that a liberal response will be made to it throughout the Church generally.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,—The General Assembly, at its meeting, at Toronto in June, 1876, recognizing the importance to the Presbyterian Church of Manitoba College, unanimously agreed—"that it is entitled to the hearty support of the Church, and that it should be maintained efficiently in its various departments." A Special Committee was appointed with instructions to issue a circular to congregations, pointing out the necessity for the College and asking for a contribution towards its support. The Committee carried out the instructions of the Assembly, but the report, presented at the meeting in Halifax, last June, showed that only a few congregations contributed, thus leaving a large deficit in the funds of the College. The Special Committee was re-appointed with instructions to appeal urgently to our congregations, and to wealthy members of the Church on behalf of the College. The Committee after mature consideration of the present position of the College, its importance to our Church, and the necessity of maintaining it in a state of thorough efficiency, agreed to issue this circular in which they earnestly call upon all the congregations to show their loyalty to the General Assembly, and their interest in the prosperity of our Church in Manitoba, by contributing to the support of the College. If congregations generally contributed, a small amount from each would be sufficient.

The Committee would respectfully request you to bring the claims of the College before your Session and Congregation and to urge them to contribute to its support. They confidently hope that in the annual distribution of your funds, Manitoba College will not be altogether overlooked.

D. H. FLETCHER, *Convener of Committee.*

Hamilton, November 27th, 1877.

N.B.—Collections to be sent to the REV. DR. REID, TORONTO, or the REV. DR. MCGREGOR, HALIFAX.

OBITUARY.

Died on the 15th ult., at the residence of her son John, Mrs. Catherine McColl at the age of eighty-six. She was almost the last survivor of that generation that made for themselves homes in the Township of Esquesing, then a forest, in the year 1819. She was faithful in the discharge of all her relative duties to which it is not necessary to refer more particularly, for her piety, which was fervent and rational was conspicuous in her whole conduct, and in all her social relations. The Bible was her "one book," in the constant reading of which she took daily delight, and its influence on her whole conduct was obvious to all. The religious exercises which always accompany the taking delight in God's word was habitual to her. She resembled the good centurion, who prayed to God always. The weather must needs be very inclement, that would prevent her from "going up to the house of God." If others went to criticise, or from curiosity, or from a mere sense of duty, so did not she. She went to worship; and what was her duty was also her delight. Singularly free from ostentation in her profession, she was disposed to believe that others who made a high profession of Christian experience and character were superior to herself. Hers was a charity which was unsuspecting of guile. What she be-