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Toronto, December 14, 1893.

The Privilege of Giving.

THE last time we held a special service similar to this one, there was no collection taken as the occasion was considered an extraordinary one, but several of those then present have since said that the service was incomplete without a collection; that at every diet of worship the privilege should be given to make an offering to the Lord. It is well to regard the offering as a part of our worship and so this afternoon a collection will be taken." We listened to these words last Sabbath afternoon at the close of an afternoon service in one of the city churches. The offering a part of the worship had the right ring in it. It should be so regarded by all who contribute their money to the cause of Christ. The financial duties of the Church member are often forgotten when other acts of worship are diligently observed. There is room for much educating just here. To congregational work there is a distinct importance attached and every worker feels a direct interest and responsibility; it is not for a moment supposed that the burden should rest wholly on the shoulders of the pastor and elders: therefore there is a cheerful distribution of service, and those engaged in it feel that they are working for God. The same sense of personal responsibility ought to prevail with respect to the solemn duty and privilege of giving. The man or woman who may not be fitted, or who may not have an opportunity to help in the many agencies of the congregation or in the service of God's house, can take an open and direct part in the public worship by his or her offering. And this duty should not be given a secondary place in the minds of the people. The grace of giving is sure index of character. It is one of the cardinal virtues. It applies to rich and poor alike, given in the proper devotional spirit the cent, if it is the amount of one's ability, is as rich an offering as the dollar of the more able brother. The widow's mite might be made the theme, not only of showing the power of littles, but of proving the blessedness that springs from cheerful service.

But the thought arises that if the offering is to be regarded as an act of worship, it should be treated with the same consideration as the other parts of service, the service of praise for example. At first glance the subject may appear to be of too sordid a motive to be placed along side of praise. But such is not really the case. The root of the matter lies here, that the offering is an act of homage, and of worship to God. Performed in the right spirit it is a means of grace and blessing to the soul. This

granted, and it must be granted, it follows that the Church as a whole, that is the church membership does not give the subject the place which its importance demands. Spiritual life never fails to open the purse. The open purse, any more than prayer, praise or profession, does not bestow spiritual life. Liberality, it is true, is sometimes mistaken for piety, yet where Christian faith and life abounds, where the love of God and for souls fills the heart, the altar of beneficence is not neglected and no uncertain sign of the work of grace in a church is the general liberality of the people. The Church courts have given much attention to public worship; they have not given the attention the importance of the subject demands to the service of giving. It is admitted that the question is surrounded with difficulties, but it is altogether inadequate to say that special appeals to the people are all that can be done. Depend upon it this question is one that cannot be lightly cast aside or allowed to languish. If the proper conception of what "giving" means be kept in view, there is a problem here worthy of the best efforts of the Church. In other words, Church finance should be one of the great Church questions of the day to which the foremost men, laymen and ministers, should bend their energies. And this is all the more obvious as the work already done promises well. The Committee on Systematic Beneficence represents the feeling of the Church. It is the outcome of a belief that the finance, the offerings, of the Church should be systematized, and that clear and correct views of the subject should be disseminated. The field which the work of this committee covers is of enormous extent and it is a question whether it should not be invested with power to formulate plans which would render its operations effective. The recommendations submitted at last General Assembly indicate briefly the scope of the work for the present undertaken. They are:

1. That the Committee on Systematic Beneficence be re-appointed and directed to use diligence in securing a fuller statement of the actual condition of this question throughout our Church.

2. That thereafter statistics be only sought each *third* year, and that the work of the Committee in the intervening years be directed to the circulation of information, the dissemination of literature, and operating through Presbyteries at such points as may demand attention.

3. That each Presbytery be urged to appoint a Committee, or at least a convener, to attend to the interests of Systematic Giving in the Presbytery.

4. That all the Sabbath Schools of the Church be urged to contribute at least to one of the Schemes of the Church.

5. That enquiry be made by Presbyteries as to the possibility of introducing more uniform and effective methods of raising money for the Schemes of the Church, and that Presbyterian visitations and pastoral settlement be used as opportunities of securing better organization.

The second clause, while providing for much good work, seems to lack in that it does not confer more authority on the committee. In the proper hands there is much virtue in the words "shall" and "must" and they might appear more frequently to advantage in the ordinances of the Assembly. If they were inserted, for instance, in clauses 3 and 4 how much better results would be derived? The importance and value of the fifth clause should not be lost sight of by Presbyteries. Organization and uniformity are great factors of success and stability, especially in matters of finance. Instruction in the principles of systematic and