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The Canada Presbyterian

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 1ST, 1893.

Zion church, Brantford, has decided to call an assistant pastor. Doctor Cochrane has held the fort alone for over thirty years and several other forts besides and the people, than whom there is no more thoughtful or generous people in Canada, think that the time has come to lighten their pastor's labors. The only wonder is that it did not come long ago. The doctor can now give more time to home mission work. He and Doctor Robertson will make things hum in the North West.

The Interior states that in twenty-two years the pastorates in the Presbyterian churches of Chicago have changed from two to six times. As some of the congregations have been but a short time in existence some of the pastorates must have been very short. If things keep on in this way it will soon be unnecessary for a minister to take his trunk with him when he goes to his new congregation. An ordinary grip can hold all he needs. Itching ears and weak pastors are bringing the pastoral relation into contempt.

Mr. McCarthy's speech at Stayner last week was a strong, well-reasoned, high class effort, weakened a little in spots by a discussion of personal grievances that might have been shortened or perhaps left out. He scored splendidly several times. His fine scorn in describing the Ottawa government sitting as "judges" in a case on which they had paid the expenses of appeal to the Privy Council and were beaten was admirable. His confession that the gerrymander of '82 was wrong and that of last session even worse, because the party was stronger, did infinite credit to the honourable gentleman; while his impassioned utterance, 'if we cannot win by fair play we do not want to win at all,' makes one think he is in England rather than in Canada.

"Mark my words," said Mr. McCarthy the other day in Stayner, "it is generally the constituency that one does the most for that goes back on him first." That is a disgraceful fact, as many a public man knows to his cost. Ingratitude of that kind, however, is not by any means confined to politics. One of the noblest christian women that ever lived in Ontario and best of ministers' wives, used to lay it down as an axiom that "the more a minister does for a congregation the less he is appreciated." It is a fact we believe that if a minister goes tearing around the country, and keeps his name constantly before the public, a considerable number of his congregation think far more highly of him than if he stayed at home and did his Master's work.

Our excellent contemporaries, the Halifax Witness and Chicago Interior have each had an experience. The experience of our Halifax friend is rare and unique: the experience of the Interior flat and commonplace. A clergyman down by the sea, after due warning, stopped taking The Witness because that excellent journal would not stop assailing the Roman Catholic church. A Scotchman out west threatens to stop taking The Interior because our Chicago friend does not pour hot shot into Rome on every possible occasion. The Halifax journal is distinctly ahead—far and away ahead—out of all sight ahead. As long as there are so many people in this world who think that hatred of popery is Protestantism and that cursing the

Pope is personal religion, any editor might be threatened for not assailing Rome, but what editor ever lost a subscriber for belabouring Rome too much? Brother Murray, is that clergyman's peacable countenance in the General Assembly picture? If so, point him out, please.

The crisis in the Home Rule question will probably come before long. The chief difficulties Gladstone has to contend against are the tendency of the Liberals to differ among themselves and the certainty of the Home Rulers to fight among themselves. The feeling between the Parnellites and Anti-Parnellites is so bitter that some of them would wreck the Home Rule to ruin one another. Nobody outside of Ireland would mourn very much if the whole crew went into oblivion, but it makes one's heart sore to see the Grand Old Man worried in his closing days by such characters as Redmond and Tim Healy. The chances are that the parties in bidding for popularity in Ireland will make demands that it will be impossible for the government to comply with and live.

There is always some foolish talk this time of year about congregational balances. A congregation that has one or two hundred dollars in its treasury is said to be in a highly prosperous condition while one that may have fallen a little behind is supposed to be in a bad way. The reverse is quite frequently the case. It is the easiest thing in the world to get a balance in favour of the congregation. Collect some money and do nothing and your balance is an absolute certainty. Starve your minister, do nothing for the poor, or for missions, or for any good cause, and if any money comes in at all you'll likely have a balance in your favor. It is high time everybody understood that niggardliness in paying out will produce a favourable balance as easily as liberality in paying in. Before you boast of a balance always ask how it came.

Union of the Protestant churches can never be brought about by forcing a union of organisms. If the churches of the Reformation are ever to be united—perhaps they never will be—in one organic body, the union will be brought about indirectly by increasing the spiritual life of the bodies rather than by external work on the machinery. The more the churches become like Christ the nearer they come to one another without any effort whatever. Union is hindered rather than helped by discussions which show that the persons discussing think that uniting churches is not any more a spiritual matter than uniting insurance companies or agricultural societies, the object in both cases being the same—to save money. The British Weekly tells the people of England who are clamouring for the shutting up of small chapels on the ground of expense, that they might first make a move in the economy line by trying to shut up some of the beer shops. We hear a great deal about the expense of keeping up so many churches in Canada just now but the most of it comes from men who don't spend more than ten cents a Sunday on all the churches in Christendom. Men advocate union on financial grounds who spend more in liquor in a month than on churches in a twelve month.

There was a good deal of interest created last week in political circles by a couple of speeches that Mr. Dalton McCarthy delivered to his constituents. It has been known for some time that the honourable gentleman's relation to the leaders of his party has been rather strained. Matters were brought to a crisis the other week by an article which appeared in the leading organ of the party and which read the member for North Simcoe out of the party in terms that were neither conciliatory nor complimentary. Mr. McCarthy waited for a reasonable length of time to see if the government would explain or apologize, but the powers that be made no sign and the honourable gentleman laid the whole matter before a convention of his constituents and asked

them to say what they thought about it. The Simcoe men stood enthusiastically by their member and there the matter rests for the time being. Mr. McCarthy announces his intention to remove from the government side of the house and take his seat on the cross benches. What the result may amount to it is impossible to say. Something will depend on the amount of time and labor the honourable gentleman is prepared to spend in promoting his new departure. If he goes into the constituencies and works with his usual energy an independent Conservative party may be among the possibilities in Ontario. If he does little more the movement perhaps saw its high water mark last week. If he sinks down again into a mere party hack after the strong speeches of last week he has committed political suicide. One thing is clear. A few able, resolute, independent Conservatives could do the country an immense amount of good service at Ottawa just now. Mr. McCarthy may, as he says, have rendered himself a governmental impossibility, but he has possibilities for good within his reach at the present moment much greater than those within the reach of any member of the government.

THE PASTORATE.

Is the present system of permanent pastorates conducive to the best interests of both pastor and people? Does it afford the most favorable opportunities of usefulness to the pastor and, at the same time, does it advance the highest spiritual development of the people? We cannot very well separate this dual question for it deals with corresponding, not conflicting interests. If a modified itinerancy is best for the congregation then it is best for the ministry, but if it be possible that there are conflicting interests the balance should lie on the side of the congregation as the ministry exists for its sake.

Our worthy sister, the Methodist church, has grown marvelously under the itinerant system, and that not only in new countries, where, for a time, itinerancy is practically universal, but under the shadow of an endowed national church where she had to contend against every possible difficulty of custom, wealth and power. Now, when she is established and has wealth, prestige, and learning, the question of a more permanent pastorate is agitating her, while the desirability of a change in the direction of itinerancy is one of the questions of the near future with us.

There are evils under our system for which some remedy ought to be devised either by the better use of the power we have at present or by such changes as may give increased powers in the interests of both minister and congregation. To all appearance the permanency of the pastoral tie seems to be all in favor of the pastor; he can stay as long as he wishes or remove as soon as he pleases. In regard to the latter phase there has been more than one instance within the last five years where changes have been made, or desire for such exhibited within a year of settlement and these in the face of the direct opposition of the congregation.

Again the age limit in the permanent pastorate is booming ominously dark for pastors past mid-age. After forty-five it is difficult, and after sixty virtually impossible to change. Yet there are many faithful, godly men, willing to serve, and for whom some form of service is absolutely necessary, and whose service would be most advantageous to the church, who now have either to remain in an uncongenial field, or knock unavailingly at the doors of vacancies or as a third undesirable necessity seek some other occupation until the church permits them to enjoy the munificent provision (:) she has provided for those who live to the three-score and ten.

Can the church in justice to herself allow the first evil to increase to the detriment of weak congregations and the second to continue to the serious injury of the morale of ministry without any effort being made to remedy either?

We venture to suggest that if at the end of every seven years the pastoral tie

was held to be officially terminated while at the same time the congregations were at liberty to recall the present pastor if mutually agreeable, these evils would be minimized, if not cured. Three months might be allowed to afford congregations the opportunity of exercising their right of choice, but if it were not exercised within that time, the appointment would fall into the hands of the Presbytery, or a body appointed by the Assembly, to fulfil such duties.

Any system proposed must preserve to the people the right of choice and to the ministry permanent employment, but there is no justification in pastorates being vacant for years, while willing servants are perforce standing idle in the market place. In considering any proposal toward itinerancy the fact must be kept in mind that we have one virtually in our mission charges, and by the voluntary act of ministers in charges. Last year's blue books gave us 850 charges, 119 of which were vacancies, 62 demissions, 10 translations, and 32 transferences. Considered in any possible light these manifold changes amount to itinerancy of the worst possible stamp, i. e. an unregulated one.

GOOD OUT OF EVIL.

Dr. Howie's call to salvation was accompanied or followed by a call to work, and hence his desire to be used as an evangelist in some way. With this object in view he studied for a while under private tuition in Syria. He then made two visits to Scotland, 1874 to 1879 and 1880 and 1885. But while his hopes were glowing, suddenly, almost in a moment, he lost his sight completely. Medical treatment, however, enabled him to see once more, but not for long, for as early as 1880 or 1881, his first session in theology in the University of Edinburgh, his eyesight was of no use to him in studying and he had to depend upon the assistance of a reader or amanuensis, which at the best is but a poor substitute for eyesight. To this, add the difficulty of acquiring the English language sufficiently well to follow philosophical and theological lectures. To all this was added the greatest difficulty of all, the discouraging remarks of even good and friendly people, who felt sure that blindness was an insurmountable obstacle and that failure was inevitable both at college and in the mission field. Soon after, however, the professors, at least, gained confidence in their blind student and treated him with the greatest kindness and consideration, and Doctors Charteris and Flint did their utmost to convince other Christian people that while it is true blindness is a serious drawback, Mr. Howie had compensations which almost, if not altogether, made up for his loss of sight and that there need be no fear of employing him either at home or abroad. He attained to and retained a good place in the classes and was awarded three prizes and honourable mention. In June, 1884, he was licensed by the Presbytery of Edinburgh, and in 1885 came to Canada, bringing with him numerous testimonials and recommendations. The Presbyterian Church in this country of course felt kindly towards him and desired both to help him and to use his services, but the old and not unnatural difficulty was still in the way and the question was often asked how can a man totally or almost totally blind do anything in this comparatively new and sparsely populated country? Nevertheless Mr. Howie worked his way and delivered his lectures on the relations of Bible lands and the Jews to the Bible. He travelled through Ontario and all the provinces east, on the Sabbath occupying pulpits and on week evenings the platform. One of the most influential dailies said that "Dr. Howie has done more than any single individual to make Canadians see Bible characters living and acting in Bible lands and times," for he lectured not only in the city, but also in out-of-the-way places and made it possible for districts sparsely populated and difficult of access to see and hear a man from the Land of Promise describing His native land and bringing Lebanon, Nazareth, Bethlehem and Jerusalem almost to their door.