

The Presbyterian Review.

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THURSDAY, JUNE 24TH, 1886.

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA.

THE admirably full and well prepared Report of the Committee on Statistics for the year 1885-6 of our Church, submitted to the Assembly just closed, by the convener, Rev. Dr. Torrance, of Guelph, affords much ground for thankfulness and encouragement.

The Church now covers the whole of the Dominion in no attenuated way from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The number of presbyteries alone is now 40, and if Central India be added, 41.

The total number of pastoral charges is 773, of which 173 are in the Synod of the Maritime Provinces, 142 in the Synod of Montreal and Ottawa, 196 in the Synod of Toronto and Kingston, 198 in the Synod of Hamilton and London, and 64 in the Synod of Manitoba.

There are, we regret to notice, no less than 113 vacant charges, a state of things which must result in serious loss to the spiritual life of congregations and general damage to the interests of the Church.

The 748 ministers' names on the rolls of presbyteries, and 68 residing in bounds whose names are not on the roll. About 80 congregations do not report this year. It appears that 37 ministers demitted their charge in the course of the year, 6 ministers were translated to other charges in the bounds, 17 to charges in other bounds.

The number of congregations reporting is given as 944, being 16 more than for the previous year. Collecting all the churches and stations in the various synods and presbyteries we find there is an aggregate of 1648 throughout the Church, a decrease of 154, liable to reduction by the returns from the Presbytery of Regina.

The number of families reported last year was 71,883, this year 71,911, an increase of 416. There is good reason to think this is far short of the actual number as many of our churches, even some of the largest, have failed to supply this very desirable information.

"It ought to be regarded as an omission for which no justification can be urged; first, on the general ground that every family belonging to a congregation ought to be known to its minister and office-bearers, and, secondly, for the special reason that in our system of Church management, under which it is presumed that every ruling elder has a district allotted to him for his particular oversight, there should be no family connected with a congregation, even for a brief season, that is not known to some member of session, or that is not called upon, and its church connection and spiritual condition ascertained, and made the matter of conversation."

If the spiritual life of the Church is to be measured by the givings of its members we fear there is a very large percentage of ordinary church-goers who fail in their privileges and their duty. It appears from the report that there are nearly 19,000, or more than 25 per cent., that do not give of their means for the maintenance of the gospel in their midst.

A very gratifying increase is noticeable in the number of single persons attending church not connected with families of congregations, nearly 1,000 being reported in advance of last year. This happy state of things is ascribed to the influence of Young People's Associations and other congregational agencies for bringing to church the strangers and young men and women away from home in the large cities and manufacturing districts.

The total number of communicants on the roll is reported 127,611, an increase of 4,167, an aggregate increase in the last three years of more than 11,000. There is an increase in all the synods with the exception of Montreal and Ottawa.

The number of communicants added during the year is 15,765, of whom 10,555 joined the Church on profession and 5,210 on certificate, an increase on the previous year. The number of communicants removed from whatever cause is given as 8,517, leaving a net gain of 7,248.

The baptisms during the year were 10,913, being 9,905 infants and 1,008 adults, a total increase of 643 on the previous year.

In the item of elders there is an increase on the number reported last year of 144, the number being 4,770, and on other office-bearers an increase of 483, the number being 7,767.

The attendance upon the weekly prayer meetings shows also an increase, the reported average attendance being 39,625, an increase of over 3,000 on the previous year.

The attendance at Sabbath school and bible class reaches the enormous number of 100,937, an increase of nearly 2,000, while engaged in teaching these was employed the small army of 11,761, being an increase of 747.

It is not surprising from the above figures to learn that the number of missionary associations has increased from 366 to 406, a fact which shows that the missionary spirit is spreading throughout the Church.

Manses for ministers are provided by 489 congregations, and rented houses by 55. During the year 16 manses, 32 churches and 1 school house have been built.

Turning now to purely financial matters we find that the stipend promised from all sources was \$690,819. As there was no column for this entry last year it is impossible to institute a comparison between the years, but we have reason to conclude that here also there are tokens of increased liberality. The stipend promised by congregations alone, that is without aid from outside sources, was \$628,685, an increase of \$11,192 over last year. The stipend paid by congregations alone was \$642,394, an increase of \$13,709 on the amount promised, and no less than \$24,901 over the amount paid for the same purpose in 1884. But this bright picture is somewhat marred by an ugly spot. The arrears for stipend which last year was bad enough, being \$14,603, has become worse this year by over \$1000. It is not easy to estimate the amount of hardship this failure to meet obligations represents but it cannot but be in many cases large. It should be a sacred duty with presbyteries to see that proper steps are taken to reduce if not wipe out these arrears.

But while the item, arrears for stipend, has increased it is very reassuring to find that the total amount received from all sources shows an increase of \$36,598, the total being \$640,486. If we take the number of pastoral charges as reported by presbytery clerks at 773 the average for stipend would be about \$883.

As might be expected from the recent disturbances in the North-West the amount expended on church or manse building is not so large this year as last, the total payments for these two objects last year being \$674,760, this year \$587,797, a decrease of \$86,963. The total amounts for pastors' support, for church and manse building and for other strictly congregational purposes, reach the very large sum of \$1,260,706, against \$1,301,583 of last year, showing a decrease of \$40,877.

Turning now to the schemes of the Church we find that the payments for the Colleges have been \$46,496, a decrease of \$6,573; Home Missions, \$32,509, a decrease of \$1,165; Augmentation, \$33,077, an increase of \$2,699, an actual increase of both of \$1,534; French Evangelization, \$19,086, an increase of \$1,721; Foreign Missions, \$43,532, an increase of \$3,803; Aged and Infirm Ministers' Fund, \$7,890, an increase of \$1,924; Widows' and Orphans', \$5,376, an increase of \$719; Assembly Expenses Fund, \$3,604, an increase of \$82.

Last year the total contributions to the schemes of the Church were \$188,741, this year, \$192,736, an increase of \$3,995.

The total contributions for all purposes have been \$1,545,906, being a decrease of \$12,312.

Subjoined is a statement of the total income and of the increase or decrease for the past ten years—since union in 1875:—

Table with 3 columns: Year, Total Income, Increase. Rows include 1875-76, 1876-77, 1877-78, 1878-79, 1879-80, 1880-81, 1881-82, 1882-83, 1883-84, 1884-85, 1885-86.

The total amount contributed by the Church for all purposes in the course of the ten years now completed is \$13,907,482, an average of \$1,390,748 a year. Well may the committee exclaim, "Has not God blessed and prospered and led to devise liberal things? To His name be the glory."

The committee has with much pains instituted a comparison of the progress of the Church in some of the more interesting and important items of information furnished in the returns for 1875-76 and those for 1885-86, but we must defer consideration of this to another issue.

An editorial on French Aggression and Missionary Interests appears on the first page.

ASSEMBLY NOTES.

SATURDAY'S session was occupied with the discussion of the question of College Consolidation. Unfortunately Mr. Charlton's Committee were divided in opinion and so presented two reports, one advising that the subject of consolidation should be sent down to presbyteries, the other, that no further action should be taken in the matter, as consolidation is impracticable. The vote for sending the matter down to presbyteries stood 80 to 116, so that it is evident the subject will be up again, for so narrow a majority shows clearly that there is throughout the Church wide-spread dissatisfaction with the present state of affairs.

MONDAY morning was devoted to the Augmentation Scheme; and such a spirit was manifested in all the speeches as ought to tell upon the receipts for the coming year. The fact was pressed upon the members that the success of the scheme depends very much upon the heartiness of the ministers in supporting it. In many cases it was alleged the people have been cold towards it because the minister has been cold. We are not at all despondent with regard to this scheme and look for a steady advance in the income from congregations each year as its advantages become more and more apparent.

MONDAY afternoon was occupied in the discussion of North west matters in connection with the report of the committee appointed to consider the questions raised by the overtures from the presbyteries of Brandon and Rock Lake. We trust that the differences which have occupied so much of the Assembly's time this year, may all have disappeared before the Assembly meets next year in Winnipeg.

MONDAY evening was devoted to the French Evangelization scheme, and as usual the report and speeches thereon were listened to with great interest by a very full house. The adoption of the report was moved by Prof. Campbell, of Montreal, in an able and eloquent speech, giving an interesting historical sketch of the work and of his connection with it.

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On Tuesday an attempt was made to change the decision to hold the General Assembly next year in the city of Winnipeg, but notwithstanding Principal Grant's striking observation that the difference between a man and a donkey was, that a man could reconsider, but a donkey could not, the house refused by a fair majority to change its mind.

THERE seemed to have taken possession of the house on Tuesday afternoon, a strange lassitude so that no one seemed ready to engage in discussion. One of the most striking incidents of the afternoon was the acceptance of Mr. Wm. Mortimer Clark's motion practically abolishing the common college fund without a debate or

division. Those who were members of the Assembly which adopted the principle of a common fund after long and somewhat warm discussions in committee, and who remembered the fact that a member of Assembly was asked then to lead in a prayer of thanksgiving for such a happy solution of a question which had caused much anxiety, must have been thunderstruck at the sudden abolition of the scheme. But to save appearances it was perhaps well that the Assembly allowed all congregations to do publicly what some have done privately, to give to the college they most desire to help.

On Tuesday evening the reports on the State of Religion and Temperance were presented and some interesting speeches on those important subjects were delivered. Mr. Parsons, Mr. Lyle, Dr. Caven, Mr. Scott and Mr. Bremner, gave most valuable addresses on evangelistic effort, and on salient points in the report on the State of Religion, and the veteran apostle of temperance, the Rev. John Smith, of Toronto, gave a rousing address on Prohibition.

WEDNESDAY was largely occupied in receiving the reports of the various Committees of the Assembly, such as the reception of ministers from other churches, the application of students for standing in our colleges for exceptional privileges. We were especially glad to see a strong disposition to insist upon a high standard of scholarship in those seeking entrance into our ministry.

In the afternoon Dr. Caven presented a resolution with regard to the duty of our government towards the Indians of the North-West territory, a resolution which so thoroughly expressed the mind of the Assembly, that at Principal Grant's suggestion it was carried by a standing vote. Dr. Caven spoke with intense but chastened energy, and produced a fine impression. The high moral stand he took was quite in accord with the dignity and honour of the Assembly and his own personal character.

In the evening Dr. Jardine presented the Sabbath School report, which was of a most encouraging nature. Dr. Jardine has placed the Church under the deepest obligations by the faithfulness and ability with which he has discharged his duties as Convener, and we confidently anticipate most valuable results in the future from his devoted labours. The report on Sabbath observance was ably presented by the Rev. W. T. McMullen, of Woodstock. We wish more time could have been allowed for the discussion of that important question.

On Thursday morning "the slaughter of the innocents" began, and in the afternoon the Assembly was brought to a close by a short address from the Moderator, and the usual closing exercises.

It has been said that a Moderator rarely leaves the chair with as great a reputation as he entered it, but certainly, that saying does not hold good in the present instance. The Moderator has filled the chair with dignity, has ruled over the house with judgment, and has shown executive ability of a high order in his conduct of the business. That he was able to pay most unremitting attention to his duties even on those days when the heat was excessive, is a cause for thankfulness.

A NOTICEABLE feature in connection with all or nearly all of the reports presented to the Assembly, is the apology the conveners felt obliged to make for their necessarily imperfect statistics. It seems impossible to obtain returns without much correspondence and worry, and frequently in spite of all efforts the returns at last are not forthcoming. This is a most unsatisfactory state of things. It is not creditable that men should assume office and be unwilling to discharge the duties pertaining to it. The presbyteries should immediately look into this matter and remove the reproach that must necessarily attach to continuing poor business methods. The man who has records to keep and statistics to prepare and forward should do his work as unto the Lord.

It is a matter of general observation that the work of the Assembly has been dispatched this year in a most business-like manner. Those who feared that the interests of the Church would suffer through the absence of many of the old habitues of the Assembly must be agreeably disappointed. The new men did their work on the whole admirably, and demonstrated the truth of what we have often urged, that the Church has no lack of men ready and able to do any work she may impose upon them. Let the presbyteries in the light of this year's experience repeat next year the experiment of sending up a goodly array of new men.

It has, we notice, been lately urged in certain quarters that the conveners of committees should have a permanent place in the Assembly. The need for this proposed innovation was certainly not made evident in the late Assembly. No part of the Church's work suffered perceptibly from the absence of any man, however zealous or gifted. There were others equally zealous and gifted to take his place. The Assembly has yet to discover that the services of any one man are indispensable. Such "feelings" of public opinion, however artfully put forward, savour merely of toadyism and will meet with repulse only. Besides, such plans of preserving the continuity of the court of Assembly are un-
Presby-