

## THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

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C. BLACKETT ROBINSON, *Editor and Proprietor*,  
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TORONTO, FRIDAY, MAY 17, 1878.

## FINANCIAL PROSPERITY.

IT is rather remarkable that, in a time of extraordinary commercial distress, the various Christian Societies have to report an increase of their incomes during the past year. The Tract Society has a balance of a few hundred dollars to its credit. The Bible Society has the advantage of a special gift through legacy, but waiving that, it has a small sum to its credit over and above the ordinary expenditure. At the late meeting of the Presbytery of Toronto, its Convener of Home Missions, the Rev. J. M. King, made a most satisfactory statement as to the contributions to this scheme of the various congregations within the Presbyterian bounds. Not only have all the Churches given, but the aggregate amount of Home Mission contributions is larger than during any preceding year. It is the same with a number of other Christian and benevolent objects. The returns of each and all are satisfactory in the extreme.

This is simply a gratifying fact in times so distressing as these undoubtedly are. There has been great stagnation of trade. The values of goods have shrunk to an alarming extent. While real estate has kept up, it has been because of holders being able to hold it in expectation of the dawn of more prosperous times. At first sight we should say that all benevolent societies would suffer in consequence of the times to a greater or less extent. No one would have felt disappointment had a deficit been reported as to the funds of religious societies generally. It was almost a foregone conclusion that these great interests would suffer by reason of the commercial panic. But it is in most instances otherwise, and we should thank God for it. The last thing we would have expected in these times was a balance on the right side of any of these great schemes in which we are all so deeply interested. But there is the fact. In some cases the amount at the disposal of these Christian societies is small, but it is most gratifying that there is some show of a balance. It teaches us the lesson that we should take courage and go forward.

For one thing, this result shows that there is no real distress amongst the people as a whole. The times are bad; the pressure is great; the prospects are not over-encouraging; and yet the Christian community can give more largely than ever to the cause of the Master. When we remember, as we do with the deepest gratitude, the magnificent harvest with which the goodness of the Lord crowned the past year, it is evident that while there may be stagnation of trade, there is no real want. There is nothing approaching the character of a famine. We have only to look upon a portion of China at this moment to see what a fearful calamity is experienced through famine, and how weak and paralysed a nation may become. Had such a famine overtaken our land as that of China, the narration of which has made our blood run cold, it would have been simply impossible that our benevolent associations could have reported any satisfactory progress. In such dire circumstances we could only have felt the blessedness of receiving—not that of giving—not that certainly of relieving the wants of others. But the fact that we can give at all, only shows that the Lord has been good to us in the past. With all that maybe said regarding hard times, there is still presented to us the real substratum of national prosperity, as exhibited in the gratifying returns of these benevolent and Christian societies. And then, the present year has opened with delightful prospects. It may take time to restore business to its wonted channels and to its accustomed prosperity. But if we have a crop such as we have reason to expect from the extraordinary promise of the present season, we may reasonably look for still another increase to our benevolent and Christian objects. A condition of scarcity argues one wherein it would be impossible to give to the work of the Lord. There must therefore be real prosperity at the foundation of our present commerce. We have only to trust God and go forward, and if He crown the present year as He did the past with His goodness, it will mean that there will in the year to come be still a larger share of Christian benevolence.

It may be difficult for some to account for this increase of our benevolent contributions in the face of a wide-spread commercial distress. For our part we have no difficulty in the explanation. We gave the reason for it in a recent article. Times of depression are times of blessing under disguise. People are taught wisdom by them. In prosperity we squander our money. Theatres are the fashionable resorts. There is every kind of extravagance in dress, in gait, in worldly enjoyment. Times of adversity come; and men cut off their luxuries. They learn the value of the pulse and water upon which Daniel and his companions grew fat and healthy. They cut down such luxuries as tobacco, and strong drink, and they make the grand discovery that they are healthier and better without them. They learn the value of the church and her services, and money that would ordinarily go to luxurious indulgence is saved for higher and nobler objects. We make bold to say that there is hardly a church in the land suffering from these times. The churches are, in fact, better off than they are in prosperous times. The people are led by straitened circumstances to give heed to

the duties of religion, and they show their appreciation of the church and services by giving to these what ordinarily would have been spent in self-indulgence. Even the large class who compose the regular membership of the churches, and upon whose benevolence the work of the Master so greatly depends, by denying themselves what in ordinary times they would deem necessary, are able to continue their contributions in even very trying and pressing circumstances. And thus as a general rule the income and benevolent work of our congregations do not fall away during commercial depression.

By such remarks we do not wish to be understood as wishing that such hard times should continue. But we trust our Christian people will learn from the experience of the past few years, and continue to take delight in those things which make for their peace. As long as God blesses us with good harvests, we need not fear for the future. What we dread from prosperity is over-indulgence. But we do not think that the lesson of prudence, of thrift, of economy, which we have learned during times of commercial distress will be thrown away upon us during the prosperous years of business which we believe are now dawning upon us.

TAMSUI MISSION HOSPITAL,  
FORMOSA.

NO Christian mission to the heathen is now considered to be thoroughly equipped without a well-organized medical department. In the character of a physician, skilful in healing bodily disease and relieving physical pain, the missionary is in a position to prepare the way for the exercise of his proper functions as a herald of that gospel which brings salvation and health not only for the body but for the never-dying soul; and the grateful patient just delivered from bodily suffering or from temporal death is generally inclined to give a favorable hearing to the message of eternal life which he would otherwise have treated with scorn. In no case has this fact received more marked illustration than in connection with the Formosa Mission of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

We have now before us the "Report of the Tamsui Mission Hospital, for 1877, by B. S. Ringer, M.R.C.S., England, and L.S.A., London, and G. L. Mackay," printed at Amoy, and giving a succinct account of the hospital work for the year. Mr. Ringer takes charge of the hospital in the absence of Rev. J. B. Fraser, M.D., as he did before that gentleman's arrival on the island, and Mr. Mackay testifies that he "takes as lively an interest" in the work "as if sent out by the Church." The report shows that, during the year, 1,440 new, and 770 old patients were seen at the hospital, and that seventy-seven of these cases were serious enough to require indoor treatment. The diseases most prevalent seem to be those of the eye and eyelids. Next come skin diseases, debility, intermittent fever, rheumatism, etc. The prevalence of eye disease is traced to the want of chimneys, and to injuries received at the hands of the barber. Sometimes cures are effected which make a marked impression on the native mind and greatly increase the popularity of the mission. Of this character was the case of a woman whose relatives had laid her out for burial in antici-