

British American Presbyterian, 102 BAY STREET, TORONTO. FOR TERMS, SEE EIGHTH PAGE. C. BLACKETT ROBINSON, Editor and Proprietor.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Letters and articles intended for the next issue should be in the hands of the Editor not later than Tuesday morning. All communications must be accompanied by the writer's name, otherwise they will not be inserted.

OUR GENERAL AGENTS.

Mr. Wm. Evelyn, General Advertising and Subscription Agent, will visit Brantford, Galt, Guelph, etc., in the course of this and following weeks.

British American Presbyterian, FRIDAY, MAY 18, 1877.

The treasurer of the Board of French Evangelization, begs with thanks to acknowledge the receipt of ten dollars from "a friend," Port Burwell.

The Ottawa Free Press mentions that the Rev. J. B. Edmondson, of Almonte, gave an excellent address at the Sabbath afternoon temperance meeting in that city last Sabbath.

We beg to direct the attention of our readers to the interesting letter from Rev. J. M. Douglas of the Canadian Mission, Indore, Central India, which will be found on our second page.

For more than a week past, fears were entertained for the safety of the City of Brussels. It is gratifying to know that the steamship and passengers are safe; and that the cause of delay was nothing more serious than the breaking of the shaft.

We are in receipt of a neatly printed daily edition of the Windsor Record. The paper in every respect is most creditable to the publisher, and is entitled to the hearty support of the business men of the thriving town it aims to represent.

The Newfoundland seal fishery this year promises to be remarkably successful. Before April 7, no less than 165,000 seals had been landed at St. John. One steamer, the Neptune, brought in 42,000—a wonderful cargo, the results of twenty-six days of seal-hunting, and valued at \$126,000. This is considered the largest cargo of seals ever brought into any port in Newfoundland.

CHALMERS' CHURCH, ELORA.

The memorial stone of the new Chalmers' Church, Elora, was laid on Monday, the 7th inst., in the presence of a large concourse of people. The following ministers occupied seats on the platform:—Rev. Dr. Topp of Knox Church, Toronto, Moderator of the General Assembly; Rev. Mr. Smellie, Moderator of the Presbytery of Guelph; Rev. Messrs. McGregor, Torrance, D. A. MacDonald, J. K. Smith, Davidson of Alma, Anderson of Rotheray, Milligan of Garrafraxa, and Rev. James Middlemiss, pastor of the congregation. The proceedings were opened with praise and prayer conducted by Rev. Mr. Smellie, who afterwards made a few introductory remarks illustrative of the history of church edifices in Elora and vicinity, tracing them through the usual stages of log, frame, brick or stone, and then called on Rev. Mr. Middlemiss to read the documents which had been prepared for the purpose of being deposited in the stone. After the usual preamble, names of office-bearers of the congregation, names of contractors for the building, etc., this document stated that "The congregation of Chalmers' Church, Elora, was formed by the Rev. George Smellie, minister of Melville Church, Fergus, acting by authority of the Presbytery of Hamilton belonging to the Presbytery of Canada, on the 22nd of February, 1856, the number of communicants being sixty-six," and that "Mr. James Middlemiss was, on the 3rd of June of the same year, ordained to the ministry and inducted as pastor of the congregation." This document was deposited in the receptacle made in the stone for that purpose, along with the following: current coins of the realm; copy of the communion roll; list of subscribers to the new church; reports of Bible and Tract Societies; minutes of General Assembly; copies of BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN, Globe, Mail, Elora Express, Elora Observer, Guelph Mercury, Guelph Herald, and Annals of Guelph. The stone being placed in position, Rev. Dr. Topp, who had previously performed the usual ceremony and delivered an eloquent address. The church is expected to be ready for opening in December. It is in the early Gothic style, will seat 700, and cost \$10,000. The larger portion of this amount has already been raised by subscription. In the evening a company of between seven and eight hundred assembled at a tea meeting in the drill-shed. The proceeds amounted to nearly \$200.

THE ELDERSHIP.

It was a well merited compliment which the Synod of Toronto and Kingston paid to the Rev. Mr. Middlemiss by unanimously recommending the publication in the BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN, of the able and interesting paper on the Eldership which that gentleman read at one of its meetings. Valuing as we do the paper of Mr. Middlemiss as an important contribution to our columns, and esteeming the honor of THE PRESBYTERIAN being recognized by the Synod as worthily representing the Presbyterian Church in Canada, it gave us much pleasure to publish the article in question in our last week's issue. Every one present was delighted by reason of the Eldership being presented as it was, and also on account of the earnest and instructive discussion which followed, and which resulted in adopting practical measures in reference to the matter before the House. Subjects such as this are surely entitled to be considered as legitimate business of the Church Courts. They are pressing from their very necessity. The welfare of the Church depends upon the amount of consideration that is given to them. When they are treated with neglect or indifference, it argues a low spiritual condition of the Church. And we think the Synod acted wisely by engaging with earnest zeal in a discussion from which much good to our congregations may be expected.

It is evident at a glance that the ruling elders of the Presbyterian Church in this country form no mean body. With an average of four or five to each congregation, there must be several thousands of elders throughout the Dominion alone. They thus constitute a vast numerical force. They are fairly representatives of all classes of society. Being elected by the congregations themselves, they are men of sterling worth and marked piety. In general they are well educated. By their talents and industry a very large number of them have risen to the highest rank in their various trades and professions; while others, being younger and only beginning life, may well be expected on account of their character and qualifications to attain to prominent positions in the country. The obvious inference is that here we have, if properly disciplined and instructed, an immense army of workers for Christ. Here is a vast spiritual force lying at our very door, which becoming potential, may accomplish great results for the Church.

We are only beginning to realize what the Eldership really is in itself, and what it may become by assigning to it its own legitimate place. There has in the past been much misunderstanding with reference to this office. A wide distinction between ministers and elders, if not in theory yet in practice, has been generally made. The minister under such conditions as are implied in this distinction, was expected to do everything. It was his duty of course to do all the preaching. It is as yet almost an innovation for elders to lead in prayer at the weekly meeting. At all events it is so in the old country, where in many places the prayer meeting itself is "an unknown quantity." Till very recent times the minister was expected to do all the visiting. The duties of elders narrowed themselves down to the help they rendered at the communion, to attending the meetings of session, and visiting perhaps a sick acquaintance. But with the advance the Church has made in many respects, progress has taken place with reference to the Eldership. Many members of session attend the Presbytery and other Church courts, and evidently take a great interest in the business before them. They are active visitors of the congregation. They wait regularly upon the sick. Not unfrequently do we find them conducting special district meetings with advantage to themselves and others. They realize they are one with the ministry of the Church. The ministry no longer speaks or thinks of elders as laymen. They regard them as co-officers in the Church. For these reasons we question the expediency of separating elders from ministers, as is done by elders' associations, an invention let us say of modern times. Without doubt such associations will do good. They must do good, with the noble work which they assign to themselves, and by reason of the earnest and prayerful spirit in which they do it. Still elders' associations are objectionable on the ground of the separation of ministers from elders, which they imply. Nor can we see they are required, when we have such elders' associations as those of the Session, the Presbytery, the Synod, and the General Assembly. The members of these courts are all elders, and without entering upon the discussion as to the question of their being more than one grade in the eldership, we remark that the work of teaching and ruling elders is one. As Mr. Middlemiss says, "The oversight of elders is paternal." That applies to ministers as well. They are to care for the flock. Their work is spiritual. The work may be varied, such as praying with the sick, giving counsel, visiting the congregation,

teaching in the Sabbath school, preaching the gospel, but it is all one work, having a common purpose. Ministers and elders therefore constitute one body.

With the practical suggestions contained in the paper of Mr. Middlemiss, we entirely concur. Nay, we strongly emphasize them. While many elders are fully discharging their duties, yet for many reasons a large number hold back, and are contented with simply waiting at the communion table and attending the Session meetings. Too often the control of the Sabbath-school is allowed to pass away from the Session to a society of teachers, who have no organic connection with the Church, who may act wisely or unwisely according to the circumstances, without in either case caring for the commendation of the rulers of the church or fearing their interference. Every elder will not necessarily make a good superintendent of a Sabbath school, but in all fairness the congregation might expect their superintendent to be an elder, or deacon, or at least a member of the Church. It is incumbent upon the Session to look diligently and wisely after the young of the flock, and in this connection it is pleasant to see so many elders now actively discharging the duties of Sabbath school teachers. The plan of parochial division, which is touched upon by Mr. Middlemiss, is one that commends itself to the practical common-sense. The late Dr. Norman Macleod had somewhere like fifty members in his Session, each with a district of his own. The Barony congregation, though one of the largest in Scotland, was thus sub-divided into small portions, any one of which could easily be reached by an elder. And thus Dr. Macleod was able to do so much parish work, besides carrying the load of public business and literary work from which the Church and the world are benefiting to-day. Dr. Chalmers set a noble example in this respect by the division of his parish into twenty-four portions, and placing over each an elder and deacon. Such a division of labor in a parish must tend to the thorough working of it, and while educating the elders day by day for still higher attainments, it will save the time of the minister and enable him to conserve his talents for the edification of the Church. There is besides a great work to be done beyond parochial requirements, which ministers cannot overtake, such as conducting services in remote and newly formed stations. The overture of Rev. Mr. Gray of Orillia, from the Presbytery of Barrie to the Synod, looked in this direction. Mr. Gray put great stress upon the eldership for such a work. It is our feeling that with the advantages which elders enjoy—the advantages of education, association, sympathy with the work—these gentlemen might in emergencies occupy the place of the minister to advantage. And it is certainly not expecting too much from them to look to them for supplying good practical preaching in needy localities. The whole question of the Eldership is one of great interest. The discussion in the Synod was, besides very interesting and instructive, an earnest for the future, giving promise as it does of the Eldership being more self-asserting than in the past. The Presbyterian Church, in many aspects, is at present in a transition state. In respect of its Eldership it is undoubtedly so. We are just making the discovery of what a splendid body of men they constitute. And other suggestions will follow as to the practical work in many directions which they may accomplish. We simply close by saying that the attention which has thus been drawn to this subject will tend to revive the Eldership in the estimation of the people.

The report for the past year of the congregations of Carlisle, Ailsa Craig and Nairn, under the pastoral charge of the Rev. John Rennie, shows the following results:—Families, 85; communicants, 160; additions during the year, 17; in religious classes, 142; S. S. teachers, 18; volumes in libraries, 678; stipend paid to minister, \$300 with rented house; contributed for College Fund, \$16.88; Home Mission, \$60.10; Foreign Mission, \$80; French Evangelization, \$24; Aged and Infirm Ministers, \$18.82; General Assembly, \$8.50; total for schemes of the Church, \$163.30. Contributions for congregational purposes, \$308.02 Total for all purposes, \$1061.82. The new church erected at Ailsa Craig a few years ago, is now completely filled by a gradually increasing congregation. The congregation at Carlisle are also taking steps towards the erection of a new church there to replace the old frame edifice in which they have now worshipped for many years. The following may also be mentioned as showing the good feeling existing here between pastor and people. On Saturday last, the 12th inst., a deputation called at the residence of the Rev. J. Rennie, Ailsa Craig, and in the name of his many friends in the vicinity presented him with a very handsome carriage, set of harness, etc. An address in very friendly terms was read by L. E. Shipley, Esq., ex-Warden of the County of Middlesex, to which Mr. Rennie made an appropriate reply, and warmly thanked the donors for their kindness.—Cox.

AFRICAN MISSIONS.

FROM AN AFRICAN POINT OF VIEW.

In a recent number of Fraser's Magazine appeared a very interesting paper on African Missions, written by a native missionary who discusses the mode in which Christian missions in Africa have been hitherto carried on, and attributes the comparative barrenness of results to an injudicious desire to Europeanize the negro, as well as to Christianize him. He shows that, even in a physical point of view, the failure to regard his constitution and idiosyncrasies, and the undue desire to impose on him the habits of Europeans, has been injurious and even fatal to a healthy type of African Christianity. He well exposes the arrogance and contempt with which Englishmen who know almost nothing of the African language and habits of thought, speak of both, tacitly assuming that every thing which is not English must be barbarous, and should be put down. He forcibly pleads for more generous and judicious consideration for African idiosyncrasies, manners and customs, and should our own Church turn its attention to this new and interesting field for missionary enterprise, it would be well to give full attention to the considerations he urges. As the writer is Principal of a missionary college, much of that he urges relates to the subject of education. He says: "In the work of elevating Africans, foreign teachers have always proceeded with their work on the assumption that the negro or the African is in every one of his moral susceptibilities an inferior race, and that it is needful in everything to give him a foreign model to copy; no account has been made of our peculiarities—our languages, enriched with the traditions of centuries; our parables, many of them the quintessence of 'family and national histories; our modes of thought, influenced more or less by local circumstances; our poetry and manufactures, which, though rude, had their own tales to tell; our social habits, and even the necessities of our climate. It has been forgotten that European ideas, tastes, languages and social habits, like those of other nations, have been influenced more or less by geographical position and climatic peculiarities; that what is esteemed by one country polite, may be justly esteemed by another rude and barbarous; and that God does not intend to have the races confounded, but that the negro or African should be raised upon his own idiosyncrasies. The result has been that we as a people think more of everything that is foreign, and less of that which is purely native, have lost our self respect and our love for our own race, are become a sort of non-descript people, and are in many things inferior to our brethren in the interior countries. There is evidently a fetter upon our minds, even when the body is free; mental weakness, even where there is physical strength, and barrenness even where there appears fertility."

The following extract is given from a letter addressed by the Rev. James Johnson, native pastor of Sierra Leone, now Lagos, to Governor Pope Hennessy, Dec. 1872:—

"The attempt to Europeanize the negro in Africa will always be a resultless task. This is the feeling of the most advanced minds of the race. If it were possible, which happily it is not, to civilize and Christianize the whole of Africa according to the notions of some Europeans, neither would the people themselves nor the outside world be any great gainers by it; for the African would then fail of the ability to perform his specific part of the world's work as a distinct portion of the human race."

The following additional extracts from this able article will show what the writer considers the necessary requisites of successful mission work in Africa, and it might be added, in other countries besides Africa: "There is a solidarity of humanity which requires the complete development of each part in order to the effective working of the whole. To make the African a parasite upon the European would be no gain to mankind. The problem, it appears to us, which the imagination, the wisdom, and the Christian charity of the missionary world has to solve is how to elevate the African, or enable him to elevate himself, according to the true Christian standard, upon the basis, as Mr. Johnson suggests, of his own idiosyncrasies."

"The Christian missionary in Africa should not only be well trained, highly educated and large minded men, but they should be men of imagination, logical power, and philosophic spirit, understanding how to set most effectively to work in clearing away what is really evil, and erecting on a durable foundation a permanent superstructure of good. They should be men who understand that it is useless to pour new wine into old bottles, and who are willing to prepare the soil by a judicious husbandry of years, if not of generations."

The New York Independent puts a good deal in a nutshell in the following paragraph: "When a Unitarian becomes 'liberal' he loses his church; then he preaches a while in a hall; then he loses his hearers; then he takes to writing for the magazines or lecturing on Shakespeare; and meanwhile the rest of us go to church and send our children to Sunday-school, as though nothing had happened."

CHRISTIAN LUXURY AND GOSPEL STARVATION.

In an age whose increasing luxuriousness shows itself even in its church-building, and when the general desire to have new and magnificent churches furnished with every luxurious and costly appliance clogs lands congregations in debt which paralyse their missionary exertions for years, and tempts to all sorts of humiliating expedients for "raising" money to meet their obligations, the following thoughtful remarks from the Contemporary Review should be well weighed and considered. It forcibly expresses what many members of Christian congregations have long been painfully feeling:—

"This question of costly fine churches and chapels must have caused thoughtful men and women many a pang. Let us draw a little picture. A clergyman comes to a new neighbourhood. In some hired room he gathers a congregation. In a short time he and his backers begin to feel ashamed of the hired room, or the little iron church, or whatever place it is. They agitate for subscriptions 'towards the erection of a suitable edifice for the worship of God and the preaching of the Gospel.' The spiritual destitution in the neighbourhood is appalling, and as houses are being rapidly run up all around, the new edifice should be capacious enough to accommodate a large congregation. The sum required will be—how much shall we say. Shall it be £6,000, or £10,000, or £20,000? Ground has been offered very cheap, designs have been submitted, and one has been approved. If a certain sum is subscribed among the miscellaneous friends by a given date, six gentlemen are prepared to put down £500 apiece. Who does not know these things by heart? There is a stir made. The whole world is canvassed; young ladies take subscription cards or get up bazaars; advertisements and placards demand to know what you will do 'for Christ,' which means, what you will do for certain pining, well-meaning people, who are bent on doing the thing creditably; and the church is rapidly run up. It is found impossible to squeeze out money enough to build the steeple, so the place is consecrated without one. In a short time there is another subscription canvass; a boundary wall is wanted. A short pause, during which the poor people's pockets are allowed to take breath; and then the box goes round again—for a new organ. And, in about a year, it goes round once again for the completion fund, and so the steeple is erected at last.

"If religion is to be merely the summit or flower of mental and moral culture, then our increasing expenditure upon ornamental churches and chapels, while our brethren and sisters perish of hunger, sin, and ignorance on our doorsteps, may be defended. Let us have our costly hotbeds for forcing the best human specimens of what civilization can do, and get all we can out of religious and artistic sentiment in aid. But is this Christianity? If it is, by all means let us go on paying high prices for the 'elevation' of those who are ready to indulge their aesthetic aspirations, instead of casting the money into that treasury at whose door is whispered night and day the blessing of them that were ready to perish. "There is one aspect of this subject which must not be overlooked. The practice of 'boasting up' for money is attended with a thousand evils. What loss of self-respect in those who beg and those who give! What shifts and evasions, what flatteries and humiliations, what back-stair work, what angling in the meanest puddles of poor human nature! And last, not least, how much real injury is done by squeezing money out of thousands who can ill afford it. How much of the very noblest and most necessary work of private charity goes undone while 'our building fund' drains the shallow purses of those who, after all, are doing little more than holding on by the skin of their teeth! If the money that ought to have gone to the poor relation, or the struggling neighbour, or the overworked dependent, is diverted to the building fund, who will dare in open day to affirm that it was contributed 'to the cause of Christ.' What they may try to persuade themselves in the dark is another question."

In Canada we have two sides to a picture. On the one side, wealthy city congregations worshipping in churches—not too beautiful, certainly, for the worship of God—but fitted up with every luxury which rich and luxurious people desire for their own comfort. On the other side, poor and struggling congregations in remote back-woods stations hardly able, if able at all, to build a rude structure of pine in which to worship God after the manner of their fathers; while the poor missionary or catechist who must share their poverty can hardly procure even the bare necessities of life with the miserable pittance which is all they can afford him. Nay, in some cases, he has even to pay his own expenses out of what scanty private means he may possess. Then, looking a little farther from home, there are the heathen, who, we are constantly told, are "perishing for lack of the bread of life." It is true there are few if any wealthy congregations who do not give somewhat to such objects. But do their gifts for the necessities of others bear any due proportion to what they spend on their own pleasure? Christian men and women who are commanded, as Christians, to "look not on your own things but on the things of others," consider whether in this thing you are true followers of Him who "left us an example that we should follow His steps."

The Congregationalist replies to Cardinal Manning's question, "Take the Catholic and Roman Church out of the world, and where is Christendom?" Yankee-like by asking another—"Leave the Catholic and Roman Church in the world without any other, and where would Christendom be?" We cannot answer the conundrum.