

al will be carried out, and we shall then look forward with earnest and prayerful expectation to a success like that which rewarded the efforts of our Montreal friends.

A PLEA FOR PRESBYTERIANISM.

COMPARED with other denominations, Presbyterianism is not aggressive. The secret of its steady increase is to be found not so much in the inroads which it makes upon the ranks of other religious bodies as in its missionary spirit, and in the hold which it takes not merely on the individual, but on the family. Most religious denominations take advantage of the reading tendencies of the present age by issuing books and pamphlets in abundance, blazoning the merits of their respective systems. Even the Roman Catholic Bishop of Toronto has lately ventured to publish a little book, pointing out the merits of his own Church, and recommending it to the attention of the reading public. Books written specially for the purpose of praising Presbyterianism have always been scarce, and their number does not seem to be greatly increased even by the exigencies of the present day. This apparent want is, however, sometimes supplied from unexpected sources. It would be considered an exceedingly strange thing to find a Plea for Presbyterianism published in the shape of a Government Blue Book. It so happens, however, that the "Report of the Inspector-General of Prisons in Ireland" admirably serves that purpose. Its statistics, considered in the light of the scriptural axiom "By their fruits ye shall know them," furnish most unequivocal testimony in favor of Presbyterianism. In the year 1876 there were 41,817 criminals committed to prison in Ireland. These were distributed among the various denominations as follows: Roman Catholics, 36,296; Episcopalians, 4,123; Presbyterians, 1,160; others, 238. That is, for every Irish Presbyterian sent to jail there were four Episcopalians and between thirty and forty Roman Catholics. But, it will be asked, how do these figures look when compared with the numbers of the various denominations? Well, we will attend to that matter presently. Of every hundred of the population of Ireland, about 76 are Roman Catholics, 12 Episcopalians, and 9 Presbyterians. Of every hundred of the criminals, 86 are Roman Catholics, 9 Episcopalians, and between 2 and 3 Presbyterians. In other words, Popery produces 10 per cent. more criminals than its proper share according to the number of its adherents, while Episcopacy produces 3 per cent., and Presbyterianism nearly 7 per cent. less than its share. These figures speak for themselves. The increase of Presbyterianism means the increase of good order and morality; the increase of Popery means the increase of crime.

WRONGFULLY CHARGED.

OUR Halifax contemporary, the "Witness," copies an extract from the "Mail" which deals with the alleged "high-handed" and "unbrotherly course" of the "Free Kirk" majority against the "old Kirk" minority in the Presbytery of Toronto, and asks, "Is it so?" So far as we know (and we have as good an opportunity of knowing as the "Mail's" correspondent), there is not the

slightest foundation for the charge. In other words, the grievance is an imaginary one altogether. There is no desire on the part of any portion of the Presbytery to tyrannize over the other. And in reference to the particular case referred to by the "Mail's" correspondent, the Rev. D. J. Macdonnell immediately wrote to the "Mail" disposing of the foolish charge in the following fashion:

"The only fact furnished in proof of this allegation is that in arranging a series of missionary meetings within the bounds of the Presbytery of Toronto, care has been taken to provide that not a single minister of the Old Kirk is appointed to speak in the city." On referring to the circular, I find that *three out of twelve* meetings in the Toronto group (those in Charles Street church, East church, and Brockton) are to be addressed by men of Kirk antecedents. The proportion of Kirk men to Canada Presbyterians in the Presbytery being about one to five, this share of work ought to be, from your correspondent's point of view, more than enough. Even had the fact been precisely as stated by your correspondent, I am satisfied that there are not two "Kirk" members of the Presbytery of Toronto who would have thought of importing to the Committee, or to the respected Convention, the motive imputed in the letter, the substance of which appears in your columns."

We would not refer to the matter at all had not the "Witness" pointedly asked us to "throw light on the subject." Having done so, we trust it will never again be necessary for us to allude to a complaint which is either prompted by stupidity or jealousy—or both.

BIBLE READINGS.

[With the view that it may furnish a useful suggestion to ministers of our own Church, at least where they are not too far away from each other, we copy from the "Evangelical Churchman" the following article recommending Bible Readings to the Episcopal clergy.]

AMID the press and engrossing cares of a business, we wonder if it occurs to our laity to estimate the amount of labour and care which devolves on the clergy. The weekly effort to prepare fresh sermons for the same congregation; the constant claim on their time for visiting the members of their congregations, the sick, and the poor, or again the Bible-class, the confirmation class; besides all the extra parochial work from which no earnest clergyman can escape. The mere physical toil is great, the wear and tear of mind is still greater; and when by an occasional exchange of pulpits some slight relief is sought, the great loss remains unrelieved, viz., that he is ever giving out, and never receiving. The mind and soul need to be fed, and he who has to feed them needs, above all, to be plentifully supplied.

It may seem as a paradox to suggest as one means of coping with this evil, the proposal of additional duties for our clergy, but we do earnestly believe that nothing would refresh and invigorate them for their ministerial duties more than the systematic communing together on the Word of God. It is indeed somewhat common in England to hold conferences on a great scale; and the example is being followed in Canada. In our Rural Deaneries also, meetings of the clergy are held from time to time. Nor do we propose to offer any objection to either. But what we now suggest is something of a greatly more simple character. What we desire to see is regular meetings of the clergy in any city, town, or group of parishes within easy distance, say once a month, for the prayerful study of God's Word. In the larger towns such clerical Bible readings might be expected to bring together six or eight ministers; some with their Greek Testaments, or Hebrew Bibles, all with the fruits of their life study of God's Word. In the Rural towns

only two, or three at most, might be able to meet. A passage, or passages, should be previously agreed upon, and "as iron sharpeneth iron," so the friendly conference, or discussion, the interchange of opinions, the appeals to commentators, or to the original text, could not fail to send home all refreshed and instructed. Their united prayers would kindle all to new zeal; their interchange of views would awaken fresh light on obscure or difficult passages; and the personal experience of each in the Christian warfare would in not a few cases cheer and encourage to fresh zeal those who were growing faint and weary in the arduous and responsible work of a parish minister. Above all, it could not fail to tell on the effective services of the pulpit. The clergyman would return to his people with renewed life; and in the very consciousness that he brought with him deeper perceptions of God's Word, he would preach with a power and unction that could not fail to awaken the attention of his people.

Bible readings are becoming more common among the more earnest of our laity; not meaning thereby the mere reading together of one or more chapters of the Old or New Testament; but the careful and prayerful consideration of the lessons involved, and the diligent comparison of one portion with another, so as to discern "the mind of the spirit," and to "search the Scriptures," so that they may bring forth the hidden treasures in that divine gift of revelation which "is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." If then our laity are so engaged, all the more needful is it that the clergy should study and search diligently, even as the elder prophets and teachers "enquired and searched diligently what, or what manner of time the spirit did testify when it spake beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow." "Not unto them but unto us," of this later dispensation, are revealed in all their fulness things that the very angels desire to look into. The New Testament is indeed so simple and clear that the wayfaring man, though a fool, cannot err in the grand truth which can make him wise to salvation. But also that same Testament is full in its revelation of much which no less invites to ever renewed search and diligent study, so that the ambassadors of Christ may preach to us in all its fulness a crucified and risen Saviour, whose second coming the expectant church is encouraged to look and to long for. We believe that clerical Bible-readings, conducted in no controversial spirit, but in a humble and prayerful desire to "bring forth things new and old," from the inexhaustible treasury of God's Word, would prove alike to the clergy, and to their people times of refreshing, pregnant with richest blessing to the Church at large.

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THE usual Missionary Meeting was recently held in St. Paul's Church, Peterboro'. Rev. Mr. Torrance the pastor, presided. Addresses were delivered by Rev. Mr. Bell of St. Andrew's Church, Rev. Mr. Willoughby of the Methodist Church, and Major Malan, a gentleman who formerly laboured as a missionary in Africa. An appreciative audience filled the large church. The music, under the leadership of Mr. Galletly, was excellent. In every respect the meeting was a great success.