

The Presbyterian Review.

Vol. XI.—No. 27.

TORONTO, JANUARY 10, 1895.

\$1.50 per Annum

REMIT ON STUDENTS GRADUATING.

BY REV. J. ROBERTSON D.D.

For the Review.

THE Home Mission Committee (W. D.) recommended the General Assembly to enact "that all graduating students, and ministers received from other churches be required to give at least one years service in the Mission Field before being eligible for a call." The recommendation was discussed by the Assembly and remitted to Presbyteries and the Senates of the College of the Church to consider and report to the next Assembly. Since then there has been no discussion of the subject through the press, and since only about one fourth of the ministers of the Church were at the Assembly, will you allow me to give the opinion of one member of the Home Mission Committee? For years the inadequate supply of our Home Mission Field has been before the Church, but the remedies provided have been only partial. The Summer Session in Manitoba College reduced the Winter vacancies in Western Canada one third; but this is not enough. According to the report of the Home Mission Committee there were between sixty and seventy missions with (say) 200 stations that received supply only during the summer last year and over thirty more that received support for only nine months. And much of the supply given in other fields was unsatisfactory, Presbyteries being obliged to employ catechists without mental training or experience, in important missions rather than close the church door. It is difficult to estimate the loss that the Church has sustained during the long years of the past by this unwise policy. In certain parts of Canada Presbyterianism has been smitten by a wasting disease, the result of neglect and exposure to hostile influences. The Committee sees its money going to support a mission that might soon become a spirited congregation, if continuously supplied, but the money is often wasted and development arrested by the policy of summer supply and winter starvation. The people do not hibernate, nor do other churches; and our people have before them the contrast between our methods and the methods of other churches to our disadvantage. The Home Mission report tells us e.g. that places like Kagawong with sixty seven families and 168 communicants were without supply last winter. With plenty of men in the church—more than can find regular employment—does it not look as if something should be done to remedy this? This winter I was told that probationers in some cases were getting only four or five sabbath's supply in the quarter being elbowed out the rest of the time by graduating students—and others. The Committee proposes to send our young men to the frontier for one year that we as a church may reap where we have sown and that we may not be expending money with the sure prospect that not we but some one else is to reap the benefit.

Let me give a few general facts. The policy of summer supply and winter neglect has long been pursued by us in Central Ontario and with what result? Take thirty five constituencies between York and Glangarry and you find according to the Dominion Census that the

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| Population increased in 20 | and decreased in 15 |
| Presbyterians " " 20 " " " 15 | |
| Methodist " " 25 " " " 10 | |
| Anglicans " " 15 " " " 20 | |

Why should the Methodist Church show in that district to such advantage as compared with the Presbyterian Church? Is she sounder in theology, are her ministers better trained, are they better preachers, is their preaching more acceptable to the Canadian people? To all such questions a negative answer must be given. What then is the matter? Partly that they never leave a mission or congregation without a pastor, while we frequently do. If they keep the church door always open, conduct their ordinary and special services with regularity; visit the sick and bury the dead of their own families and ours too, small wonder if many people belonging to the Presbyterian Church cast in their lot with them when they have for fifteen or twenty years received only summer service and there is small hope of anything better. Nor have the congregations and missions in that part of Ontario touched bottom yet. Unless some change comes—and speedily—some now self-sustaining must receive help.

It was reported at the meeting of the General Conference of the Methodist Church held last Autumn that the increase in membership in that Church during the quadrennium then ending was 27,000, our increase for the same time according to the Assembly returns was 16,905. There is a difference in the mode of reporting members in both churches, but it will not account for this difference. The "grand total" our communicants for 1892 was 183,525 and for 1893 181,370 or a decrease of 2,155. The Church knows that the drift of our population is toward the cities and towns if the Church consequently holds her own in the country she will be strong in the cities and towns, but if she loses the country she will find it hard to hold her own in the cities. The battle for the cities is to be fought out in the country. Take these figures from the Dominion census and explain what they teach if the foregoing contention is not correct.

| Cities. | Incr. % in Population in 10 yrs. | Incr. p.c. Anglicans. | Incr. % Methodists. | Incr. p.c. Presbyterians. |
|----------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Kingston | 36.7 | 31.8 | 85.0 | 27.0 |
| Toronto | 88.4 | 49.0 | 97.6 | 88.0 |
| Ottawa | 41.0 | 38.9 | 50.0 | 36.4 |
| Montreal | 39.5 | 37.3 | 20.6 | 28.0 |
| Hamilton | 36.2 | 23.0 | 44.6 | 29.1 |
| London | 21.7 | 3.3 | 28.5 | 10.4 |
| Winnipeg | 221.1 | 178.4 | 203.6 | 145.2 |
| Victoria | 184.2 | 190.3 | 190.8 | 182.7 |

These figures we may ignore but should we? They may not be palatable reading but they should be faced and the operating cause found out. The Home Mission Committee thinks that graduates would help greatly to improve matters and asks the General Assembly to legislate accordingly.

To the recommendation there are objections on the part of students, vacant congregations and others but students *et al* can scarcely be said to be impartial judges. The church travelled in the line of the proposed legislation before and prospered why should she not do so again? The American Church followed our present plan and suffered. Objections with your permission may claim some attention later.