

glorious harvest than that of the field or the garden—the harvest of youthful souls. It is a sign of the times that plentiful conversions occur during the winter season among the children. Surely it is worth the labor of these months if the young are being led by the grace of God through the instrumentality of their teachers to the truth as it is in Jesus and to the membership of the Church. The Sabbath school is no longer regarded as a mere intellectual arena in which young wits may be sharpened. It is the nursery of the vineyard. It is the place where the affections are called into exercise. The hearts of the children are stirred by the presentation of the gospel by those who are seeking jewels for Immanuel's crown from among the ranks of the Sabbath school. It will indeed be a delight to all to see as the result of this winter's labors a large number of those who answer to the words of the paraphrase,

"In life's glad morn, when sprightly youth
In vital ardor glows,
And shines with all the fairest charms
Which beauty can disclose,"

to see such blossoming into spiritual fruitfulness. These will become teachers in turn. They will fill the ranks of church membership as they become thinned by death or removal. The Sabbath school is indeed a most hopeful work. Now while it is called day, let our Sabbath school teachers be up and doing. Let them exhibit strong faith in the working of the Spirit's power. Let hope brighten their efforts, and courage make them staunch in the performance of their important duties.

THE "MAIL" ON THE SIN OF DEBT.

AN article with the caption, "Mania for New Churches" lately appeared in the columns of one of the daily newspapers in this city. The article would probably be regarded as slightly pretentious in more respects than one, but with its general tone there is not much fault to be found. It condemns some practices which it is to be hoped, few would justify: it states some truths which are too obvious to be lost sight of by persons of ordinary intelligence; and it makes other statements which are more specious than true, but which will mislead only those who are more than willing to be misled in the matter to which they refer.

We would not condemn less strongly than the "Mail," the methods said to have been adopted lately by a congregation in this city for removing the indebtedness under which it had come by extensive improvements made on its church property. It is to be hoped that it will never become general in Canada to use the Lord's day and the usual hour of worship for beating up subscriptions from all and sundry who may happen to be present, and many of whom are there for the sole purpose of worshipping God. And whatever the time or the method taken for raising funds for the erection of Churches, or for any Christian object whatever, if the money subscribed can only be paid by an act of injustice to lawful creditors, it is wrong. Religion, that which the church is erected to promote, can never gain by it. And we are thankful to the secular press if it helps us to stamp such a course with reprobation. The "Mail" will not expect contradiction from any reasonable being on this other point also, that it is "wrong from

a business point of view, wrong, especially from a Christian point of view, to go in debt in order that a handsome structure may be built, when the structure is unnecessary, and there is already a building in existence capable of meeting every need." We know a little about the churches in our city, and we do not know any case in which this has been done, or in which it is likely to be done. The leading men in all the churches have at least an ordinary measure of good sense, and not many of them are burdened with superfluous money. They may be trusted not to do anything so very foolish as to pay their hundreds and thousands of hard-earned money to erect a new church when one exists capable of meeting every need. May we suggest to our critic that the membership of a congregation is the best judge of the suitability in form, dimensions, and locality of the existing edifice to "its every need?"

When the "Mail" tells its readers, that when more churches are built than are necessary it is a "superfluity of architecture," when it says that it is undesirable for congregations to contract debts that will impose too great a strain on the means of their members, it calls attention to a real danger of our time and of our city. The unnecessary multiplication or the unwise and injurious concentration of churches in certain localities, is we apprehend a more serious peril of the future than the extravagant cost of the new erections. Hitherto, we believe, the churches of Canada, almost without exception, have met their payments of interest promptly, and have gone on reducing their indebtedness. What individual or society has lost money by loans to churches in our city or neighbourhood? We do not say that some of these churches are not approaching the point of peril, which some churches on the other side of the lines have actually reached, where the handsome edifice has had to be put up for sale to satisfy the creditor. In this light the warning of our contemporary is not unseasonable. Again when it reminds its readers "that churches exist for man, not man for churches," and "that the supreme object of the Christian church is to raise the individual man physically, mentally, morally, and spiritually; to teach him that it is the decoration of heart and soul which is of importance; that the heart should be the temple of a sacred indwelling; that the body pure, and undefiled, should be worthy of an immortal spirit with divine relations;" it says what in substance is repeated very often from every pulpit in this city. In saying it, however, and in saying it so well, it deserves the thanks of the religious teachers of the people among us.

But when in connection with the subject of church erection, it quotes the words of the Apostle, "Owe no man anything;" when it affirms it "to be wrong from a business point of view and wrong, more especially from a Christian point of view, to go in debt in order that a handsome structure may be built in which to worship," and says there is no difference "between a Christian body housing itself expensively, and the lady who runs a bill she or her husband must make shifts some day to pay, in order that her form may be draped in costly attire and shall glitter with jewels;" we have no hesitation in affirming that it has parted with good sense and is saying that

which is specious simply and not true. Where the congregation can pay the whole cost of the erection at the time when it is built, it is doubtless most desirable that it should be done, and where the structure is an inexpensive one, such as were most of the earlier churches in Canada, or where the congregation numbers persons of exceptional wealth, this may be not only desirable but possible; but to lay it down, as the "Mail" virtually does, as a principle of universal application, that it is "wrong from a Christian point of view to go in debt" in the erection of a handsome church for the worship of God, is to take ground which can be maintained neither by consideration of justice nor of policy. In many cases it would be unreasonable to expect the membership of a congregation at the time of its erection to pay the whole cost of it, and to pay it in a year or two at most. And in a still greater number of instances to defer the erection of a new church, until the whole money which it should cost was paid or even subscribed would be far from taking the wise course in promoting the interests of the congregation or the denomination—would, in fact, be most impolitic. Let the Trustees of the Metropolitan Church in this city—to take only one instance—say whether in the interests of the body and of religious work and life as represented by it, it has not been a wise thing to erect the handsome building in McGill Square, even though a large debt still rests upon it.

We are not sorry that the "Mail" has given its views on this question. Truth ever gains by discussion. Where the churches are guided by right aims and ordinary prudence they have nothing to fear from such articles. The more liberally disposed should not grudge the comfort which they give to some who find it difficult to part with their money, either for churches or for any other public object. It is difficult, however, to suppress a feeling of surprise at the quarter from which this warning against the contraction of debt, comes. If rumour is not even more than ordinarily false, our contemporary has not hesitated to contract debt on a large scale, and has sunk in promoting party ends a far larger sum than the most extravagant of the Christian congregations, of this or any Canadian city is likely to expend on a church edifice. But perhaps the article on which we have thus freely commented, is the indication of a new departure in this respect. If it is wrong for Christian people to contract debt in the erection of handsome churches, can it be right for the newspaper which addresses to them such grave moral lectures on the subject, to do so in providing a first class daily? There is only one answer. Let us trust in the interests alike of high morality and of apprehensive paper-manufacturers, that in this case right and fact—so often separated—will be fully accordant.

MEETINGS OF PRESBYTERY.

BARRIE.—At Barrie, 1st Tuesday of February.

TORONTO.—In the usual place, on the 1st Monday of March.

OTTAWA.—In St. Andrew's Church, Ottawa, on Tuesday, 5th February, at 3 p.m.

PARIS.—Presbytery of Paris meets in River Street Church, Paris, on first Tuesday of February, 1878, at 11 a.m.

LONDON.—Next regular meeting in 1st Presbyterian Church, London, on the third Tuesday in March, 1878, at 2 p.m.

MANITOBA.—In Knox Church, Winnipeg, 2nd Wednesday of March.