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TORONTO, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 3rd, 1888.

THE *Globe* estimates that the five principal crops of Ontario—fall wheat, spring wheat, barley, oats and hay will bring twenty-four millions over the sum obtained for the crop of last year. During a part of last summer one would almost have concluded that there would be a famine in Ontario this winter. The drought, it was alleged, had destroyed everything. It now turns out that the drought was confined to two or three localities, and even in these localities the yield is more abundant than was expected. Prices are good, and the prospects for a fair fall business are excellent. There is depression in the lumber trade, but that always occurs during a Presidential contest. If our neighbours over the way would annex themselves to Canada they would not need to turn their country upside down every four years to elect a head for the nation. By the time Thanksgiving Day comes round, Ontario people will see that they have as much as ever to be grateful for, and it is to be hoped many will be ashamed of the gloomy forebodings in which they indulged last summer. Somebody preached a sermon a short time ago on "How little men trust God." That is always a suitable theme in this country.

PROPHESYING is a presumptuous and very unsatisfactory kind of business for uninspired men. Two or three years ago, hundreds of people predicted with marvellous confidence that no living man would ever again see Ontario wheat bring a dollar a bushel. It is over a dollar now on all the leading markets. One of the most successful arguments used against the Scott Act was that wheat would always be low in price, and farmers should not spoil their barley market. That argument was worth much in the barley townships. How all these predictions have been falsified! Nobody knows anything about the future and yet sensible men, or men who ought to have sense, will sit at the feet of any glib tongued, self-constituted prophet and swallow all he says about the future with a great deal more confidence than they put in the word of the Almighty. You often hear men predict with marvellous confidence calamities that they allege will befall the Church, or congregations, or individuals. Judging from the confident airs with which they prophecy, one would suppose that the Almighty had clothed them with omniscience and omnipotence. It is always a safe rule never to have much to do with a man who constantly predicts evil things. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred he will be found trying to fulfil his predictions.

WE notice that a large number of Presbyteries are arranging for something more than mere routine business at their next meetings. Some hold conferences, some appoint members to prepare papers on important practical topics, some hold public meetings in the evening, and various other plans are adopted to bring the vital work of the Church before the members of Presbytery and as many as possible of the people. All this is highly encouraging. It proves that Church machinery can be used for other and higher purposes than wrangling over disputes, passing resolutions, adopting reports, and moving a vote of thanks "to the Committee, especially to the Convener." As Principal Caven well said at the Pan-Presbyterian Council, all Church work is the Lord's work, but some kinds are much more important than others. It can hardly be said that twenty or thirty

grave teaching and ruling elders are doing very important work when sitting listening to tedious discussions about mere questions of procedure, carried on perhaps by one or two members who are more anxious to shine as ecclesiastical lawyers than as preachers of the Gospel. Order is necessary. There must be machinery, but a Presbytery may not accomplish much good if it gives its whole time to the running of the bare machinery. There must be motive power, and if the Presbytery can increase the motive power it is doing the highest work.

MINISTERS who help the Third party in the contest for the presidential chair, think they should be exempt from the hard knocks that contending politicians give one another in severe contests. Their theory is that the goodness of their cause should save them. Our neighbour, the *Christian Guardian*, does not think that even prohibition will save a minister's head if he mingles in political fray.

Some ministers, who have espoused the Third or Prohibition party, seem to think that the restrictive considerations which apply to ministers engaging in ordinary political contests do not apply to them, because of the goodness of the cause they advocate. We cannot see it in this light. In an election campaign there will be the same heated strife and antagonism between the men of the Third party and those of other parties which we see in ordinary political contests. A minister who is actively working to defeat a Conservative or Liberal candidate, in the interest of a Third party candidate, is certain to provoke the antagonism and dissatisfaction of those members of his congregation who belong to the parties he opposes, and who, rightly or wrongly, deem his Third party unnecessary. Such a course can hardly fail to lessen his influence for good, in his work as pastor and teacher, and it may create serious irritation and division among his people. All the usual evils of party strife will develop in the Third party as in other parties.

It will be exactly so. A clerical member of the Third party must fight against the Tories and Liberals, and the Tories and Liberals will hit him just as hard as they hit each other. A pastor working hard for the Third party must work against both the Liberals and Tories in his congregation and may split the congregation just as fast as if he worked on the Tory or Liberal side. Fighting for the Third party will not be any safer than fighting for either of the other two.

THE *Evangelist* gives these timely and weighty words of exhortation to the Presbyteries in regard to the autumn meetings:

Happily, there is little occasion, as we have intimated, to study our machineries, with a view to their improvement; happily, no troublesome questions have come down from the Assembly to induce division of sentiment or purpose; happily, no distracting or dangerous heresy is making its appearance in any quarter. The Presbyteries have absolutely nothing to trouble or distract them. *There is nothing to do but to go to work*—nothing but to take hold of our great denominational agencies, and with one heart to develop, apply, utilize them in each district, and, so far as possible, within each church, each family, each believing breast. The time is wonderfully opportune, and every Presbytery, from Boston to San Francisco, ought to see and to seize a golden opportunity. Let every one of our great denominational agencies be passed in grateful and strict review at these approaching convocations, not in any temper of pride or any mood of formalism, but with an earnest desire to know what the Lord would have each Presbytery, and every member in each Presbytery, to do. And let there be mingled with all such inquiry, so much of united prayer, so much of mutual conference and confession, so much of the spirit of complete and heroic consecration, that these convocations shall be themselves seasons of spiritual revival, whose glad influence shall be felt the coming winter in all our churches.

Every word in the foregoing except the reference to Boston and San Francisco will apply to Canada. We have little need to steady our machinery; we have no distracting questions; no dangerous heresy. *There is nothing to do but go to work.* We think we see in the movements of many Canadian Presbyteries a desire for united prayer, mutual conference, and a spirit of complete and heroic consecration.

THE SUPPLY OF VACANCIES.

THERE are indications sufficient to justify the conclusion that the existing condition of the relations of pastors and congregations are not so satisfactory as all true Presbyterians desire. It is a fact within general experience, that there is a degree of unrest which betokens anything but a healthy state of matters. Honoured, useful and faithful ministers are chafing under the difficulties that impede their work, and wistfully look for a change where, under improved conditions, they may be able to do better work and to do it with a degree of comfort to which, in present circumstances, they are strangers. Congregations in

some instances are restive under the continuance of pastoral relations from which more or less numerous portions of their membership desire to be freed. Satisfactory and progressive Christian work under such a strain is extremely difficult. The brief tenure of the average pastorate in the Presbyterian Church is in marked contrast to the lengthened continuance of ministerial work in one congregation which formerly existed. The changed condition of affairs has occasioned misgivings in the minds of ministers and people. The unrest and inharmonious relations of pastor and people are generally acknowledged. The fact that in a Church of the magnitude of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, life long pastorates in one congregation, where the minister's influence for good has grown with his years and his place in the affections of his people has become so strong that death only can sever the tie, may be regarded as the exception, not the rule. Under the changing conditions of modern life, it may be doubted whether a return to such a patriarchal simplicity is at all possible. At present, at all events, the obvious tendency is certainly not in that direction.

On all sides it is conceded that the present condition of affairs is unsatisfactory and undesirable. On that point at least there is general unanimity. It is unfortunately almost the only one relating to the question on which there is anything like general agreement. Various and even radical remedies have been suggested, but as yet an acceptable and efficient method is not within sight. It would be idle to deny that a plan approximating to the Methodist system of itinerancy in some instances finds favour with pastors and people. Possibly one reason why this is so is that there is about it a degree of certainty that is now almost wanting in present relations in the Presbyterian Church. A minister finds himself in an uncongenial sphere where he feels, that try as he may, he cannot do his best. He has difficulty in making a change, he sees no help for it but to continue as he is. Even a conscientious and devoted man will find his energies flag in spite of himself and he is in danger of still further degeneracy. A congregation may be warmly attached to their minister. They wish to retain his services. He is popular and has been looked to with wistful, not to say covetous, eyes by another congregation. The inducements they hold out are strong enough to secure a dissolution of the pastoral relationship, and he goes to a wider and more influential sphere. The weaker congregations feel themselves aggrieved, and some of them do not hesitate to impute motives. Now both ministers and people consider that a definite, fixed term of service would at least remove the uncertainty that now prevails.

There is another existing evil that an itinerant system would largely mitigate if it did not succeed in its removal. As it is, if a minister finds it necessary to uemit his charge, he may at once, and for the remainder of his natural life, be relegated to the ranks of the unemployed. There is a thoughtless way of disposing of all such by the self-complacent and hasty conclusion that they are incompetent or inefficient. No one who is at all acquainted with those in that unfortunate position but will repudiate such an unkind, unjust and unchristian conclusion. In their ranks will be found men of superior abilities and attainments, and who are capable of doing excellent service in the vineyard if they were only assigned a position where their services and experience might be made available. One of their chief defects is that they have outlived their youthful days. Congregations suffer and suffer grievously from long-continued vacancies. This may arise from various causes, but from whatever cause arising, the congregation in all its interests is visibly injured. The appointment of a minister to a congregation for a stated term would for the most part preserve the continuity of work and the general harmony among the people. For those reasons a system akin to that carried out by the Methodist Church finds a measure of favour with many. It is to be remembered, however, that the itinerancy system is not essential to Methodism or to any organized church. In the circumstances in which the Methodist Church originated it was found most convenient, and it served its purpose well. Now, however, it is found not to work so smoothly in practice. Within the last few years there have been efforts made to extend the ministerial term and to give congregations a more direct voice in the selection of their pastors. After all, a system of itinerancy may not be the best